MIGNON.

A TALE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

Jules Romains Jardin.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
1871
CITY OF WASHINGTON

NEW YORK:
P. O'SHEA, PUBLISHER,
27 Barclay Street.

1868.

DEPOSITED IN THE
U.S. DISTRICT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

Oct. 3rd 186

PZ3
.T1735M

ENTERED according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868,

BY P. O'SHEA,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern District of New York.

MIGNON.

I.

Why do I speak again of the beloved flowers, of the verdant shades, and of the boundless horizon? Why? It is because my thoughts continually wander through the lovely scenes of this blessed land. It is there only that I forget the stern realities of life, and that I find again memories at once pure and sweet.

The lark always sings the same song, and God demands of him no other. A tree can yield but the one fruit, and the eglantine never offers, on the pathside, other than its simple wild flowers. Let me then fly from the impure atmosphere of the city; come with me, and drink in the sweet air of the woods, the hills, and the meadows; and there let me tell you the legend of the beautiful land of my dreams.

In the finest street of Saint Germain, in its airy quarter, which borders the forest, an elegant and graceful portico attracts the attention of the passer-by. It is the entrance of the chapel of the convent of the Augustinians, that peaceful retreat where women of the world find a sweet and tranquil hospitality, and where the good nuns consecrate their lives to the education of young girls.

Its proximity to Paris, the admirable site of the little town, the really maternal solicitude of the nuns, everything contributes to make this peaceful retreat a desirable home for the daughters of those mothers who fear for their young minds the elegance and dissipation of the fashionable boarding-schools of Paris.

An outer court of severe aspect, guarded by a portress of still severer mien, is surrounded by the buildings of the establishment; at the extremity of this court a door opens into the parlor, another into the apartments of the Superior and into the reception rooms.

A second court is surrounded with simple but thoroughly clean buildings, which contain on the first floor the refectories and recreation rooms; on the second, the class-rooms, and on the third the dormitories. This vast court is

adorned with large plantains, with leafy branches, under whose splendid shade joyous youth indulges in its games and frolics.

In the rear is a fine and very shady orchard, which is called the garden of the ladies, and where the young boarders are only allowed to enter on extraordinary occasions.

During the hours of study a profound silence reigns throughout this vast establishment. When the windows are open there can be faintly heard the youthful voice of some young girl reading her task, or the grave and gentle reproof of a nun. But when the studies of the day are finished, and when the first stroke of the clock summons the scholars to evening recreation, it is a charming sight from the large window of the parlor to see them pour forth from every door, like bees who rush, humming, from the hive.

It is at first a gentle murmur, like that of a running rivulet; then the sound increases and redoubles, until it finally becomes the flow of a rushing torrent, which throws to the wind its snowy foam.

Oh, youth, fertile and inexhaustible source of beauty, grace, force, and life! I cannot avoid following and contemplating you, even

as I watch each Spring, with the same joy and same astonishment, the budding flower.

Oh, youth, you emanate fresh and pure from the hand of God! You recall to me my noble origin, you cause me to remember that I must soon return to enjoy that eternal youth and those sublime beauties of which your limpid eye seems but the reflection.

Oh, youth, I listen to your soft murmur as to that of the running stream which glides thro' the Minnesota, and which will become, further on, the majestic river, the moving highway which conducts powerful vessels onward to the sea.

Oh, youth, I love you, because you are beautiful; I love you, and at the same time pity you, for your hour of suffering is yet to come. When my task is finished, then will yours begin; when I sleep peacefully beneath the waving grass, it will be you, youth, which will bear the burden of life. All ye who have not closed your hearts to sincerity, and who forget not, in the commotion of a superficial life, the impenetrable mystery of destiny, come and behold with me this charming and innocent scene. Come, and touch the mysterious links of the future.

The joyous band scatters itself under the tall plantains, forming here in couples, there in groups. Here, it is a quiet tableau which recalls the reveries of Albano or the *dolce far niente* of Winterhalter; there, it is an animated discussion, sparkling with bursts of laughter; farther on, a giddy *cortège*, which neither knows from whence it comes, or whither it goes, which runs for the sake of running, which shouts for the sake of shouting, which skips about, developing the flexible limbs, confined by long study, and which talks to hear the voice that has so long been kept silent. Aside, two friends gravely deliberate over trifles which appear to them of vast importance; the more serious converse with the nuns, who easily quiet with word or gesture this surging sea of life; others cultivate with contentment their modest garden. One should see them holding up with one hand the flowing dress, and bending forward, watering with the other their fragile rose-bush! One should see them bending their supple and slender forms to catch the ball or throw the shuttlecock! Is not everything charming and graceful at this age? And the secret of this charm is that it ignores its own existence.

A touching custom requires that every younger child shall be under the protection of a larger and older companion; this engenders a sentiment of respect and obedience on the one hand, and of protection and solicitude on the other. The little one calls this companion *mother*. The latter may sometimes be fifteen years of age, and is responsible for the personal appearance and progress of her *protégée*; it is the first apprenticeship of life. As the flower foretells the fruit, so youth foretells the future, and on each brow we can almost read and predict a destiny. This one who consoles the weeping child will, doubtless, become a tender mother. That one who chides and exhibits impatience with her pupil, will, perhaps, fail in her attempts to do too much. Will she be a little saint, who holds her rosary under the statue of the Virgin, and who appears already to think of naught but heaven? A brunette, of superb beauty, domineers over her companions, and seems to dream of the dangerous homage which awaits her entry into the world, while a languishing blonde turns her blue eyes towards the azure heavens and appears to read therein a complete English romance.

Here is one aloof from the throng, sickly and awkward, having neither the attractions of the countenance nor those of the mind; poor neglected creature, she already comprehends the inferiority which her misfortune entails upon her, and already endures the hard apprenticeship of suffering.

Thus the inequality is felt beneath the equality of uniform instruction. Thus, under the lustre of these flowers of youth one already recognizes a little world which lives, which palpitates, and which, even before the fruit is developed, is stung to the heart by the worm which is seen crawling on the stem.

It is there that the gentle influence of the wise instructress is felt. A prudent hand leads back the errant reed, or softens and mitigates the evil which has been done. A word calms the too ardent zeal, awakens the slumbering sentiment, and causes the chords of the heart to vibrate. It is the living image of conscience which recalls unceasingly to these young and tender natures, by its precepts and examples, by its love and its effusion, that divine voice which every one can hear from the depths of his soul. Thus, egotism, source of evil and destruction, is conquered by charity, fertile source of good and of life.

The startling sound of a bell suddenly stops these noisy games, these impetuous movements, this commotion, hushes these piercing voices, and silences the merry laughter. A profound stillness succeeds this tumult, and the long files of pupils, under the supervision of their watchful guardians, enter with subdued steps the halls of the refectory for their evening meal.

II.

It is the hour at which the Superior, surrounded by the ladies of the establishment, receives from them in the parlor the reports of the studies and events of the day. A description of this parlor would present but little unusual; for in making an inventory of this large apartment one would only note the necessary piano, the invariable framed drawings, a very ordinary painting of the Virgin in the place of honor, and on the mantlepiece some really beautiful artificial flowers, executed by the dexterous fingers of the scholars, the whole forming, in fact, a furniture both simple and severe, only to be remarked for its scrupulous neatness. Without dwelling upon details of so little interest, we prefer to call the attention of the reader to the personages gathered around one of the windows of the garden.

There, seated in an arm-chair, beside a small work-table, the Superior receives, from three nuns standing before her, the reports of the day.

She is a person of middle age, with a coun-

tenance at once grave and gentle; her fine features are framed in the white bands, which throw a slight shadow over her half-veiled brow, whilst the heavy drapery of her black dress falls in majestic folds to the ground. One would imagine from the expression of her eyes that she had known trouble and sorrow in her youth, were it not that the calmness and serenity of her brow indicated a character superior to the trials of life.

When the rebellious heart is conquered and subdued, when the sacrifice is accomplished, when one's only reckoning is with heaven, how all is transformed and elevated! No more yielding, no more struggling, no more vain efforts, no more aspirations after intangible riches. The emancipated soul, grown beneath the eye of God, seeks only to pour out to all that surround it that divine treasure of charity and love, with which it overflows.

What does she desire, what does she seek, this noble woman, in dividing her heart amongst these little beings confided to her care? Is it distinction? She is the equal of her companions. Is it effect? Her heavy garment is as common as that of her sisters. Is it gain? She has renounced all her wealth

and a brilliant future to live in cloistered simplicity. Is it the approbation of the world? Her life is hidden and secluded. Is it repose? She will devote the rest of her strength to this difficult task. Is it gratitude? These young birds will take flight as soon as their wings are able to bear them, and perhaps never think of the hospitable nest which has sheltered them. Is it the remembrance of those who will survive her? A cross of wood on a grassy mound will not even tell her name.

Her desires are to listen to the divine voice, to respond to the wishes of Providence, to replace the absent mother, to shelter beneath her wing these destinies, to employ the surplus of the rich in educating the children of the poor, for orphans also find an asylum beneath this sacred roof, and receive, in a separate apartment, simple and practical instruction, in keeping with the modest position which awaits them in active life.

It is to alleviate and console every misery, for the door is open to the indigent, and the experience of her worthy companions places at the disposal of the invalid the science of herbs, the treasure which generous nature has placed beneath the shade of the forest. In a

word, her desires are *to do good.* But it is not sadness that accompanies these privations, it is not severity which teaches and enforces duty, it is not austerity and intolerance which invites these young hearts to divine love.

The Savior, model of all suffering, exhibited only to those around him a loving and serene countenance, when he said: "Love one another," and the gracious image of the Virgin, smiling on humanity, is the symbol of gentleness and charity.

The Superior remembers that she is not forming novices for a cloister, but young girls for the world. Far from exerting an influence which would alienate them from their families or hearth-stones, it was necessary to initiate them, not in the spiritual existence, which is the lot of a chosen few, but in the world of the living, which one cannot condemn, since, notwithstanding its vicissitudes and errors, it is perpetuated according to the secret views of Providence.

She wished her children, on leaving her maternal guidance, to be respectful and tender daughters, dutiful wives, distinguished women, and attentive and devoted mothers. She did not despise those accomplishments which give

a charm and attraction to private life; the arts, interpreters and poets of nature, seemed to her another homage rendered to the Divinity. Sometimes even ideal beauty appeared to her to be a gift of Heaven, for she saw therein the reflection of a spotless soul.

You have heard satirists pursue with their laughter, doubts, and contempt, these lives of modesty and sacrifice; they complain that the world is too crowded, that the desire to be noted, to be conspicuous, and the superfluity of luxury, render life difficult, and prepare for us inevitable disasters; but they do not permit the humble to retire, to hide themselves in the shade, there to prepare the remedy for gnawing selfishness to heal the wounds of the battle of life, and to convert the sinner.

III.

A STEPMOTHER.

While these pious women are holding their maternal counsel, there is suddenly heard an uncommon noise at the entrance. An elegant and emblazoned equipage has drawn up before the convent of the Augustinians; the door is struck with repeated blows, which the old portress, after some hesitation, decides on opening, and explains as well as possible that the rule of the establishment forbids admission at so late an hour. A shrill voice is heard, however, from the carriage, replying with vivacity.

The poor portress is powerless; her feeble arm is pushed aside, giving her little time to ring the bell of warning, when the footmen force the guard, and an imposing person, in sumptuous toilette, very much animated by the resistance offered, crosses the court, accompanied by a young girl, simply dressed and veiled, who, in her turn, is followed by a maid,

carrying boxes; two tall footmen, in showy livery, laden with trunks and packages, bring up the rear.

The door of the parlor is violently thrown open by the *chasseur* in fantastic cockade, and it was really a strange contrast between this agitated group entering violently into this peaceful retreat, and the perfect calm with which the Superior prepared to receive her visitors, and to reply to their questions.

It seemed the wave which expires, murmuring, on the golden sand. It was the world vibrating upon the threshold of religion.

The lady was, if not intimidated, at least surprised by the calm and imposing aspect of this house of refuge, by the attitude and grave physiognomy of the persons before her, and by the coldness of the astonished glances directed towards her; she motioned, however, to her maid to bring a chair, and leaving at the end of the room the young girl and the domestics, she installed herself without further ceremony, and commenced, as follows:

"It must be confessed, madame," said she, casting a look of contempt on the modest furniture of the room, "that your attendants are none too polite. I leave my mansion, I enter

my carriage in haste, I kill my horses to see you this evening, for I leave to morrow for my *chateau*, and your portress positively forbids my entrance. If it is by your order, that is certainly not the way to increase your patronage, madame, and when people have to deal with the public, it would be as well, perhaps, were they a little more at its disposition. However, I have but few words to say, and will not keep you long from your occupations. I occupy my *chateau* a part of the year only, and have, before my departure, to attend to the installation of this young person, of whom I am the stepmother. It does not suit me to place her in a Parisian boarding-school, because I cannot dispose of her during the numerous vacations which constantly occur. I have been informed that the rules of your house are very severe, the scholars going out very rarely; in fact, being nearly cloistered. These are my reasons for giving you the preference.

"I confide, therefore, this young person to you, advising you to overlook nothing, for she is very obstinate and fond of having her own way. You might be deceived by her angelic look and soft voice, but you will soon discover, like myself, how much it is worth. Be-

sides, that is your profession, and you are paid to correct these rebellious natures. As for myself, I wash my hands of the whole affair; I have young children of my own, who claim all my tenderness, and I do not wish to have such an example before them. I am a mother, madame, and do not know whether you can understand me."

Then casting a pitiful look on her step-daughter, after this violent tirade, she spread out the folds of her immeasurable dress, surveying herself with infinite satisfaction. She was a large woman, who had not renounced all pretentions to beauty, and would not have been devoid of some attraction had not a nose too hooked, eyes too close together, a look of a vulture, and curls, resembling ringlets of horse-hair, given a hardness to her physiognomy, which her voice, gestures, and words but confirmed.

But, notwithstanding the fullness of this rustling silk, notwithstanding these luxurious liveries, is it, indeed, a lady with domineering voice, and with this look of assurance which never quails? No, thank Heaven! A fashionable woman of the higher class is rarely heard to say *my* carriage, *my* horses, *my* cha-

teau, and *my* servants. A well-bred woman, if she wishes to deserve this qualification, never forces the doors; she is simple, gentle, and polite with all, and particularly with the humble. Thereby one can always recognize true distinction, and true nobility.

It has already been truly said: "True aristocracy has nothing to gain, nothing to combat with; it is calm, relying solely on its birth, its merit, and its fortune."

In our days aristocracy of talent is equal to that of birth, and it is but just; it is a nobility just beginning, and the high position awarded to genius is undisputed and uncontested even in our frivolous society. The pen, the sword, the fine arts, and even industry give coats of arms, and in the most noble of *faubourgs* a great poet is worth a *Montmorency*. But what can be said of this false aristocracy, of monied merchants and rich speculators, who, not content with its enjoyment, wish *for its money* to take rank in the most select society, and purchase the escutcheon as it would meat and drink? They resemble actors who have barely had time to put on the coats of marquises, etc., and to put on the rouge, but who have not learned their *rôles*, and what is more,

never will know them. One should also hear them improvise. What blunders! How many *entreés* lost on the worldly stage! With the money they have amassed, on the green cloth, or elsewhere, they buy *chateaux*, horses, and friends, but they cannot buy the nobility of heart which is wanting. Their sumptuous banquets, their splendid entertainments group around them a crowd of adventurers, parasites, and *claqueurs*, but the dress-circle judges them by an imperceptible smile, which they well understand. They feel that their superiority of a day is disputed by this disdainful silence, and it is to try and establish it without controversy in the eyes of the world that they throw themselves into the exageration of a luxury as boundless as it is ridiculous.

She understood all that, the experienced Superior, who lived on the limits of the world, as the beacon shines on the limits of the storm. She understood with a glance the value of this assurance, she well imagined to whom she had to reply, which she accordingly did:

"I admit, madame, all the superiority which your position and fortune can give you over the poor portress of a convent, but she only fulfilled her duty in refusing an entrance after seven

o'clock, and be kind enough to excuse her; were I doing my duty, I should also refuse to listen to you, and should beg you to retire, for the rule of the house is absolute; but I do not wish, madame, that you should have incommoded yourself uselessly. Be kind enough to dismiss your servants, and in the presence of mademoiselle, your stepdaughter, I will have the honor of replying to you." And with a look, rather than with a gesture, she dismissed the footman and the waiting-maid.

When they were gone, and there remained only the nuns, the haughty visitor and her timid stepdaughter, standing in the background, with her veil down, the Superior resumed:

"Madame, I think you deceive yourself with regard to the character and rules of our house, which, however, you are at liberty to do. Our children are treated with maternal tenderness, punishments are rare, and we have proved it to be the best course. I am sorry to hear that you desire severe treatment for mademoiselle, but you have not been well directed. It is not for me to persuade you, that softness and friendship are more likely to recall to the path of duty than the rigors of a house of cor-

rection. It is better to tell you plainly that we cannot accept the young person whom you present.

"I could also give another reason: from the information you have given us of her character and antecedents (I regret to say it before her), we have no desire to receive her into the flock which is confided to us; she is already grown; at her age her habits are fixed, obedience becomes difficult, and our children, like your own, madame, should have but good examples before their eyes. Be kind enough, therefore, to excuse our inability to appreciate your confidence."

The young girl put her hands to her eyes, while the lady, rising abruptly, resumed, with great irritation:

"This is something quite surprising; I must confess I did not expect to find such stubbornness under the veil of a nun! Excuse me, madame, but it will be, perhaps, less difficult for you to refuse this novice, who will soon make, under your directions, all the genuflections you desire; but here is the letter of a prelate, which will have more weight than my words. I did well to procure it. I thought, however, that your interest would be a suffi-

cient motive for you to decide in my favor; for although you act for the greater glory of God, your price of tuition is none the more reasonable; of this I have been well informed."

"Spare us, madame," said the Superior, rejecting by a gesture the open letter which was offered her; "these are words to which we are unable to reply, and, as for this letter, I do not wish to see it even, after what I have heard."

"I am sorry for you," said the lady, paling with anger. "You may have occasion to regret this, for I shall soon make known in higher quarters the manner in which you treat your betters."

And taking her stepdaughter by the arm, she forced her to the door, looking disdainfully at the nuns. The young girl gently extricated herself from her grasp, advanced towards the Superior, raised her veil, and kneeling before her, said:

"Oh, madame, have pity!"

Her wearied form seemed to bend with a natural grace, like the reed beneath the blasts of the wind. The soft light of the setting sun, shaded by the foliage of the plantains,

spread itself over this brow of sixteen Summers, and faded away like a halo of many rays. The Superior paused, speechless, at the sight of such angelic beauty, of a sweetness and submission which appeared so sincere, and at the tone of a voice so pure and sympathetic. Are there not physiognomies which appear to reflect the entire soul, and which cannot deceive? Are there not ideal and privileged natures which shine radiantly thro' their delicate and ethereal envelope?

The Superior maintained silence for some time, casting her penetrating glance into the limpid eyes of the poor child, who appeared very uneasy at this examination; then turning towards her companions, she appeared to consult them, and finally, raising her eyes slowly to the haughty countenance of the lady, she exclaimed, to herself:

"My God, is it thy warning voice that tells me here is, perhaps, a victim? And dost thou place her in my arms? Dost thou, Lord, order me to succor an innocent creature?"

And again she glanced towards the silent and kneeling girl, who, seeing this doubt, felt a faint hope spring up in her heart, and taking her venerable hand in hers, she impressed

upon it a respectful kiss, and let fall a burning tear.

"Have pity on me," said she again, in a low tone.

At the moving accent of this stifled voice, at the contact of this little supplicating hand, the Superior rose, more troubled than she was willing to appear.

"Madame," said she, raising up the young girl, "we have shown you that we follow the rules which our responsibility imposes upon us; threats cannot change our resolutions, but we are always ready to allow ourselves to be influenced by a supplication which appears sincere; the grief of a poor child is well calculated to touch us and give us some hope. Be kind enough, therefore, madam, to forget what I may have said of too absolute a nature, and rely upon all the care which we will take of your stepdaughter. We will make at least the trial, and hope that she will reciprocate our friendship by an exemplary conduct."

"I knew you would consent to it at last," said the lady; "not that I attribute this change entirely to the bearing of this Agnes, but the letter which you would not look at has, perhaps, had its effect. One should not

play into the hands of rivals by a conduct too scrupulous, should they?"

The Superior smothered her indignation, and gently replied:

"You mistake, madame, in attributing to a motive so base the interest which we wish to take in your *protégée*. We give you the proof of your error by taking her on trial for the first year without any remuneration for our pains. You will only be called upon to furnish the *trousseau* and uniform."

"Madame, I do not ask for charity," said the lady, laying a roll of gold pieces on the table. "Let each one live by his profession; here is for the first year, and here is the address of my lawyer, with whom you will correspond for all necessary expenses."

"It is with the desire to oblige you, madame, that I have submitted to many bitter words," said the Superior, "but you will excuse, madame, my not being able to remain any longer; other occupations claim my presence. Here is the sister stewardess, who will receive from you the necessary information, and who will give you the explanations you may desire; and you, my sister," said she, turning to another nun, "take charge of this

child, and conduct her to her chamber, when she will have taken leave of madame."

And bowing gracefully, she retired.

When the sister stewardess had received the necessary instructions, the young girl advanced timidly towards her stepmother, but the latter merely touched her hand.

"One must avoid moving scenes," said she, ironically, holding her at a distance, then retiring without saluting any one, she called her servants, and the carriage rolled off with a flourish, and soon a perfect quiet succeeded to these agitations, so uncommon beneath the sacred roof of the Augustinians.

IV.

MIGNON.

The next day the crowd of young scholars played under the plantains in the fresh air of the morning. Nothing was talked of among the noisy groups but the arrival of the new companion, the liveried carriage, the toilette of the grand lady, and the cockade of the tall footman. The old portress, who had taken the vow of chastity, had certainly not taken that of silence; she had talked of the great events of the day before, of the great battle she had fought, and of her glorious defeat; all was commented upon and repeated by an hundred tongues.

A nun, who was considered better informed, was soon surrounded.

"What is her name?" cried they, from every side.

"Her name, my children, I do not yet know," said the nun, gently, making a gesture with her hand to quiet this tumult, "but I

saw her yesterday with madame, and she looks very *mignon* (*charming*).

"Mignon! Mignon!" repeated all the children, skipping around the place, then rushing to carry the news, which soon went the rounds of the vast court.

The name of Mignon was in every laughing mouth. The favorite parrot, enthroned on his mahogany perch in the parlor portico (and what convent is without its parrot or paroquet?) did not fail to remember the name which it heard thus repeated from every quarter; and when the Superior appeared at the top of the stairs, leading by the hand the young girl, whom we have scarcely seen through the dim twilight, the pretty parrot, swinging and twisting on his frail perch, flew on the shoulder of the Superior, and repeated, in a clear and distinct voice:

"Mignon! Mignon!"

"Yes, it is Mignon," repeated the children, jumping and clapping their hands. And the name was really destined to become that of the young scholar.

"My sister," said the Superior, to one of the nuns who approached her, "her name is the same as mine, Theresa, and to avoid confu-

sion, we shall call her by some other, according to our custom."

"Mignon!" said the parrot, in a caressing voice.

"Mignon! Mignon!" exclaimed the children, looking at the young girl, who stood calm and smiling on the top of the steps, holding the protecting hand of the Superior.

"Well, my child!" said the latter, laughing, and looking at Theresa with kindness, "your name is evidently *Mignon!* You see here little hearts which ask only to love you."

It must be confessed that the good nun, the children, the parrot, and the winds of the air, in repeating the name of Mignon, truly expressed the word already idealized by poetry and art, and which best described her beautiful nature. Have you, in a warm Summer's evening culled, by the roadside, a branch of forest roses, bruised and beaten by the rain, battered by the storm, and wilted by the heat of the day? The wounded stem is drooping and faded, when, through pity, you put it at night in a glass of pure water. And the next day, when you awake, have you noticed it? Its white petals gaze smilingly on you, and in the center of each flashes a golden drop, crown-

ed with its luminous rays of light; the buds which blossomed in the night, opening into life, unfold themselves, while its green and vigorous stem is developed, laden with its diamond drops; a subtle and penetrating perfume arising from the cup and from each young bud, and even from the stalk of the tender plant. Such was Mignon. She was the drooping branch gathered in the evening by the good nuns, and was already reviving in a more genial atmosphere. And the trace of the drops of the storm was still seen on her features as pure as the rose of the forest.

The short and awkward garment of the day before had been replaced by the long uniform dress, which left her slender figure unconfined, and gave to her carriage all its natural elegance. Her heavy bonnet, with its green veil, had disappeared, and showers of brown curls, gilded by the rays of the morning sun, clustered round her head, and waving on her alabaster-like forehead, were gathered behind in a heavy tress, and fell by their own weight, as is often seen in the profiles of Achaian medals.

It was not delicacy and regularity of features, perfect elegance of figure, finely propor-

tioned extremities, and easy, graceful carriage, which have furnished an irreproachable model to the sculptor, and who would have been able to study and appreciate this charming countenance, thus posed, as on a pedestal, at the top of the garden steps. No, this was not the secret of the impression which Mignon left behind her, as the vervain leaves its perfume on the winds. It was the expression of this beautiful countenance, it was the unconcealed and unveiled thought which shone from those large blue eyes, idealized by Grenge, the ethereal spirit which breathed from those smiling lips; it was the soul which palpitated to the extremity of her small hands, stretched forward towards her new companions; it was love, pure and boundless love, which filled this rare and lovely nature, and penetrated by its powerful charm to the bottom of these young hearts. But is it proper to place the beauty of thought above the attractions of the figure? If the narrator were reproached with inventing and uniting every perfection, every charm of the ideal on the brow of a child, we would say that it is the privilege, if not the mission of art, to dream of and to celebrate this extraordinary nature, which relieves one from the

sad realities with which innocent eyes are so often offended. Have we not seen enough of these truthful portraits, whose horrible nudity the poet and the artist have spread out before us? There is an instrument which reproduces, like a mirror, the features of the face, but why does it often give to the most beautiful countenance but a lifeless mask or an afflicting reality? Because it only reflects the matter. The writer who reproduces, without either praise or blame, pictures from which we turn our eyes, does he not descend to the *rôle* of a vulgar instrument? While elementary nature hides her ruins under flowers, and shows us an ever new and living beauty, he, the poet of reality, exhumes lifeless corpses, he makes us touch and count the worms which crawl in this corruption, and never remembers even the departed soul.

Let us fly from these repulsive scenes. Let us seek consolation in the *souvenirs* of a refined nature. Let us bless the divine beauty which shines through the moral loveliness. Let us raise ourselves towards heaven by the contemplation of this gentle being, which seems to descend from its space, and let us listen to this voice which has preserved the ac-

cents of the celestial choirs. Notwithstanding the corruptions of taste, notwithstanding the vulgar instincts of the masses, what are the images which speak to every heart? And which linger longest in the memories? They are the ideal conceptions in which the soul has absorbed and extinguished the material. They are a *Beatrice* of Dante, a *Madonna* of Murillo, a *Mignon*, aspiring to heaven, of Ary Schaeffer, a divine angel of Paul Delaroche; natures almost celestial, which elevate our minds and free us by thought from the weight of years and earthly servitude.

Pardon, then, my sweet Mignon, her beauty, her grace, her infinite charm, her irresistible *prestige;* let her descend the steps as the white-winged angel descended the ladder of Jacob; let this gentle vision mingle in the groups of the living, and thrill each young heart, that already acknowledges the influence of her look; let this ray of heaven pierce though the shade of the plantains in the vapory mist of the morning.

Mignon tendered her beautiful forehead to the Superior, who kissed it, and gaily descended the steps of the portico, placing her little hand on her heart.

"Thank you," said she, "I will love you all as my sisters."

And giving her hand to the elder ones, she kissed the foreheads of the younger children, while the smallest clung to her dress waiting for their turn, crying:

"And I, Mignon! And I, Mignon!"

The nuns gathered together, aside, and observed, with emotion, this scene, so natural and true, at the same time so interesting.

She had, then, suffered much, this afflicted child, who looked with joy on those high walls, this dense shade, these strange faces, and who already loved this place of refuge, which, to more than one new comer, bore the sadness of a prison or a tomb.

What, Mignon, have you already listened to deceitful tongues, have you detected the perfidy of a look, have you been threatened by some dark treason, to think yourself safe in this retreat? To listen with delight to these innocent voices, to mirror yourself in these limpid eyes, and to seek refuge in the arms of these new sisters with such confidence?

What! Mignon, do you already know, you so young, what envy and hatred can be

hidden beneath a lace veil or a dress of *moire*, that you attach yourself with so much hope to the serge habit of the nuns? What has this lying world told you, who are hardly entering into its life, that you should be so happy to leave it? With what bitterness has it poisoned your young recollections?

Meanwhile, the slender form of Mignon moved among her companions, as the poplar swaying to and fro among the willows. They started, and together with Mignon, made the *tour* of the vast court, she, learning and remembering the name of each scholar, noticing the faces which pleased her most, attracting those whom timidity rendered shy, and all soon felt the charm of her presence.

At the turn of an alley, she found a small creature crouched at the foot of a tree, stripping, with sadness, the leaves from the fallen branches of the plantains, apparently a stranger to all the agitation which took place around her. She appeared not more than twelve years old; her features were attenuated, her color lifeless, her large, hollow, and languishing eyes were filled with a profound sadness, her dress was soiled, her hands dirty, and her demeanor awkward.

"Who is this poor child?" said Mignon, stopping with astonishment.

"It is Graziella, a mute," said one of her companions, drawing her away; "she is vicious, and we leave her to herself."

"But why?" said Mignon. "I see each of you holding by the hand a little child, who calls you mother. Where is the mother of this mute? Who is the mother of poor Graziella?"

"Oh, she has changed her mother four times since she came here, and each one has deserted her; when the last one left the convent no one would take her place. Look at the condition she is in! And yet, the good sister Gertrude washed and dressed her this morning."

"Has she always been so unhappy?" said Mignon, looking at her with pity.

"No, she used to speak more than the others, and she can hear you perfectly well, see!"

"But she once had a fright," said one of the young girls, "and since that she has never spoken a word. If that were all, but look what a condition she is in," and loading Graziella with reproaches, she exposed the disorder of her toilette, pulling her up roughly by the hand.

"Leave her, I beg of you," said Mignon, in her soft voice, extricating the hand of the child, and taking it in her own. "See how she looks at me. She thinks, perhaps, that I also have suffered; I, who am so happy with you all to-day. Let me yield to the inspiration which comes to me. Let me try to be her mother; you must assist me, and you will see how clean and nice we will make her. What must I do to get permission to be her mother?"

Graziella, awkward, embarrassed, and ashamed, had heard these gentle words, and stopped in astonishment; the poor deserted child so little expected a sign of interest, her countenance brightened, she wiped her face on her sleeves, and her hands on her dress; and soiled as they still were, seized the hand of Mignon, and making a supreme effort, she uttered, in a suffering air, and in a guttural voice, the words: "Mother, mother!" But this name, so soft, so tender, and so easy, was the only one which could issue from her contracted lips.

"She has spoken! She has spoken!" cried all the children.

Graziella dragged Mignon, running as fast as she could, towards the Superior, who was

strolling with some of the ladies at the entrance of the reserved orchard. She placed herself before the group of nuns, presented Mignon, and kissing her hand, repeated, with difficulty: "Mother! mother!" looking at Mignon with ecstacy and admiration.

"The mute has talked, she has spoken!" repeated the children, "it is Mignon who makes the dumb speak."

"What, Mignon," said Madame Theresa, the Superior, with astonishment, after having consulted the other nuns with a look, "do you really wish to be the mother of this poor forsaken being? You will be doing a good deed, for we all love her, notwithstanding her want of care. She is not bad, and you will love her also when you learn her sad history. I confess to you, I have occupied myself with her for a long time, but without success; but you, her companion, if you treat her with gentleness and friendship, you may, perhaps, succeed, for it is a warmer sympathy which she requires. In any case, my child, I like to see you make the trial, which proves your good heart. We will inscribe you as her mother; you will replace Sister Gertrude, who was excellent towards her, but who did not meet with much success, as you see, notwithstanding

all her pains. You will be responsible for her work and her behavior; but we will not be severe in the beginning, for you will have trouble enough. Take courage, then, my dear, and expect everything from your heart. Well, Graziella, now you are happy! You have found a mother, and Mignon has untied your tongue. Let us see—speak again!"

"Mother! mother!" said Graziella, with an effort accompanied by great signs of joy.

For sole response, Mignon bent down towards the poor child, and embracing her tenderly, said to her companions:

"From this moment she is my daughter, and whoever loves me will love her."

Then, taking her by the hand, she left her no more, but commenced relating beautiful stories to her, occupying herself at the same time with her toilette, which was in great need of improvement. The first station was naturally to the fountain, where Mignon washed the face and hands of her *daughter*.

Was it not a touching group, this spontaneous union of ugliness and beauty, of infinite grace and awkwardness, which amounted to brutishness, of vivacity, of intelligence and a timidity which resembled idiocy, of strength

which protects, and weakness which has found succor and unexpected sympathy? Every eye understood the charm of this contrast, every eye followed the young mother and the deformed child, who skipped near her, looking proudly at every one, for she now felt a support, and repeated "Mother, mother!"

To say that among so large a number of companions there were no smiles of mockery, no concealed looks of envy, would be ignoring poor human nature; it would be denying the existence of the cockle in the field of pure wheat. Without regarding the emotion which had been the means of drawing a few inarticulate syllables from the poor mute, a laughing voice said to a group: "She makes the dumb speak, she will soon make the blind see and the lame walk." But Mignon was too contented; she wished neither to see nor to hear those harmless satires, and at the end of recess she followed her companions, after having fondly embraced Graziella, who was no longer recognizable after the improvised toilette of her young mother.

They were both happy, and who knows which feels the most, he who receives the daily bread or who gives it?

V.

GRAZIELLA.

WHERE does she come from, this fragile creature whom we found languishing under the plantains of the convent, whom we left consoled in the hands of the gentle Mignon, her new mother? Must this sad history be told? It is the oft-told tale of misfortune, it is the fruit fallen before the Autumn, the flowers wilted before evening.

And yet, she was formerly a beautiful child, blooming and cheerful, obliging and willing, the joy and hope of the house. Had you entered the studio of Marx, the sculptor, some years ago, you would have found what is rarely seen in this world a happy family. I love to penetrate into these sanctuaries of art, there to breathe the fresh damp air of the studio, to be present at the first labor of creative genius, to see and touch the clay which, under a powerful hand, takes a form, and even more, a thought; to criticise these shapeless attempts,

some already cast aside, others kept with care; to examine the favored plans, the finely modeled *terra cotta*, the choicest *morceaux*, preserved under glass, the graceful statuettes, the white ghosts of plaster—last expression of the artist's mind; and, finally, the blocks of marble, whose depth the sculptor sounds with a look, and of which he says: "It will be a god!"

I pause before the workman who cuts the snowy marble, developing and producing the ideal form which hides itself in the heart of the stone; and, finally, I observe the pensive brow of the artist whilst he gives the last finish to his creation, gives life to matter, and polishes, with pride, each graceful form.

Where can be found a more envied refuge, one which relieves us more from the vulgarities of life, from the heartlessness of the world, and from the weight of care? How often is oneself absorbed in the contemplation of art, and how frequent the conversations there held, in all the confiding familiarity so natural to artists, upon subjects so pure and elevating to the mind.

That is *real* life! Marx, the sculptor, was, indeed, happy. When young and strong, surrounded by his wife, daughter, and a few

friends, proud of his first success, and animated by a creative inspiration, he modeled the damp clay, singing and dreaming of the future, or when, holding the hand of his wife, he had upon his knee his little Graziella, then so intelligent and bright. Happy days!—numbered days! When the almond-tree turns its unfolding kernels and rosy blossoms to the first kisses of the sun, one blast of April wind dismantles its crest. Thus were chased away and perished the hopes of the artist.

One *must* live! Cruel word, which recalls the soaring spirit, which sinks into slumber the expansive soul, and which confines us in the iron bands of *reality*.

One *must* live! And what sculptor can draw the wheaten loaf from the bowels of the marble?

Of all arts, there is, perhaps, none which offers more despairing impossibilities, and which imposes coarser labor. The poet, with his pen, the painter with his brush, expresses an idea, and can bring to light masterpieces. . . But the sculptor! After many years of study to acquire the knowledge necessary to commence the most ungraceful of careers, he must have a vast installation, he must petrify the

damp clay like a mechanic, and hew the stone like a mason. And when at last he has modeled a figure which realizes his idea, he must purchase the marble at the price of gold, he must pay the workman who, under the direction of the master, makes the "rough cut;" and he must pass many days and nights in gigantic toil. The work must then turn, to be seen from every point of view. Then, when all is finished, and the day of exhibition has arrived, everything is to be feared from the indifference of the public, or the cruel judgments of some inferior critic, who, with a stroke of his pen, can shatter a marble statue, or condemn it to an obscurity sufficient to kill an artist of a sensitive nature.

With what love did Marx caress his charming creation of Graziella! In courting inspiration from one of the most poetical narratives of Lamartine, he had chosen this subject because it was the name of his beloved daughter. With what happiness had he hewn from the marble this ravishing form which the great poet had imagined! What success was prophesied him when the connoisseurs, seated before it, applauded with rapture on seeing this beautiful apparition turn slowly on its pedes-

tal, and present successively its perfect outlines to the rosy light thrown upon it by the red drapery of the window! It was life which animated this lovely form so gracefully bent, so distressed and languishing. The tears were real which flowed from its eyes. The marble wept!

A rich American in Paris, who was purchasing an "assortment" of objects of art on commission, without appreciating their merits, but according to the celebrity of the artists, and the orders of his correspondents, had seen *Graziella* in the studio, and merely promised to make a memoranda of it after the Exposition of fine Arts. But during the first days of the exhibition, Marx received a visit from the American, who brought with him two small newspapers, which contained ironical and withering articles upon his statue. These were two poisoned arrows, which struck the defenceless artist.

"You will understand," said the speculator from the New World, coolly, "that the publicity of this criticism depreciates your merchandise, and I cannot, as far as I am concerned, give my own money for this marble, except at a deduction of one-third—say thirty-

three and one-third per cent. on the established price. That is the custom with cotton and coffee when they are low."

The troubled artist did not reply that these criticisms annulled themselves by their contradictions, and he did not appeal to any other testimony. His statue remained. It was the black speck which appeared on the cloudless horizon, and which was soon to become a storm.

But his accounts! Having been carried away by the charm of his subject, and the love of his art, he had forgotten to adjust them. The marble, the workmen, the models, etc., had cost him more than six thousand francs, and for the artist this was an enormous outlay. He had engagements to fulfill, then hard times followed. His wife, uneasy for the future, and divining the troubles which Marx endeavored to conceal from her, fell dangerously ill. Instead of continuing his work, he was obliged to seek help and remedies for her.

One day one of his friends conducted him to a Mr. Crevecœur, a rich merchant, and an *amateur* of the fine arts; but very much oc-

cupied and absorbed by the press of business, and yet obliging and generous.

"My dear Mr. Marx," said the merchant, "I regret exceedingly not being able to go and see your *Graziella*, that I merely caught a glimpse of at the *salon*, but I do not belong to myself. As soon as I have a little leisure, count upon me. Like the rest of the world, I admire your talents, and I must have something from you."

Then, seeing the sad air of the artist, he added, looking at him with interest:

"But tell me, what about your orders and your works?"

"Sir," said Marx, "I have no right to your benevolence; why occupy yourself with my difficulties?"

"Tell them all the same," replied Mr. Crevecœur, hurriedly assorting some papers; "who would not take an interest in a man like you?"

"Well, then, sir," said Marx, making an effort, "the ministry pays us in installments the amount agreed upon; these installments are very soon absorbed by the expenses of the execution, and the necessaries of life, so that when the work is done, the produce has already disappeared, and we are no better off

than before; I hoped, that if you came to see my *Graziella*, for which I have been to great expense"——

"I cannot really do so," said Mr. Crevecœur, "but if you need money, my dear Mr. Marx, do not incommode yourself. I shall be too happy to assist a man of talent, whom I both like and esteem." And, presenting him with a paper, said: "Give me a receipt for any sum you may require, payable when you like."

Marx was speechless with astonishment.

"Sir," said he, "what you are doing is very unusual, for you only know me through my friends; I cannot express to you my gratitude; it must be a hard necessity which forces me to accept. May I then make out a receipt for two thousand francs, payable in a year? Far before that time"——

"Double it," said Mr. Crevecœur, "and now good-bye, for they are waiting for me. We will see each other again," and telling his cashier to pay four thousand francs on a receipt stipulated payable in two years, he left, excusing himself, and shaking hands affectionately with Marx, who thus saw himself for the moment out of difficulty.

With this unexpected aid, Marx recommenced to struggle onward, but circumstances only became still more discouraging. His wife continued ill; the expenses of his house augmented and no orders came in. Time passed on, and when this engagement for the four thousand francs expired, he was unable to fulfill it. Not having courage to present himself at Mr. Crevecœur's, he wrote him, asking for a delay, but received no reply; later, however, he was informed that he was too ill to leave the house; that he counted still on the *Graziella*, if it were yet for sale; but in the meantime, Marx need not be uneasy on account of his debt, which would not be demanded of him.

The calm which those kind words brought to the household of the artist was of short duration, for a short time after a banker's clerk knocked at the door of the studio, and presented the fatal bill of four thousand francs, demanded by Madame Crevecœur, now a widow. Marx, getting pale at the sight of this signature, which informed him of the death of a generous protector, replied that he had no money, but that he would explain the matter in person. The boy took his pencil,

and wrote on the margin, with all the coolness of habit: *no money*—and left.

The next day, Marx received a stamped protest; then the lawyer of Madame Crevecœur, affecting conciliatory intentions, succeeded in obtaining the signature of Marx to a most dangerous and compromising article, so that one fine day they presented him the decree which condemned him to pay to the successor of Crevecœur four thousand francs and expenses, or suffer imprisonment.

After having addressed himself to several friends, from whom he received no reply; after having exhausted every expedient to procure money; after having offered his *Graziella* to the American at a vile price, he gathered all his courage, and presented himself to Madame Crevecœur, who received him with a cold haughtiness, telling him that it was an affair of succession; that she was a weak woman, unable to defend the rights of her children, but that he might come to an agreement with her notary.

"But, Madame," said Marx, "you are not aware, perhaps, of the interest which Mr. Crevecœur took in me; he left me entire liberty with regard to the payment, and I only ask for time, having friends that will help me."

"You doubtless do not intend to take advantage of the negligence of Mr. Crevecœur," said the widow, coldly, "to deprive the widow and the orphans of their patrimony; for this bill was long since due, and we are losing the interest."

Marx, humbled, without resources, and without hope, left with downcast eyes the sumptuous house of the widow and the orphan, and returned silent and submissive to his dismantled and abandoned studio. All that he loved was for him an object of discouragement. His arms, which supported without fatigue the weight of twelve hours' labor, because the moral force sustained him, were paralyzed; his legs refused to bear him, and he sank on a sofa at the feet of his statue.

His child, Graziella, stood by his side, telling him that better times would soon come, and begging him to hide his uneasiness, so as not to disturb the repose of her mother, who was still in great danger. In the meanwhile, the authorities continued in silence their judicial work of ruin and destruction, till one morning when Marx was reached in his deserted studio, his head hidden in his hands, an uncommon noise arose at the door, a blow

was struck with violence, and several ill-favored personages entered together, one of them exhibiting a warrant.

"You are Mr. Marx?" said the constable, in a low voice; "we are directed to conduct you to prison for debt; but fear nothing, we act with all the respect due to an artist; a carriage is at the door for you."

"For pity's sake, silence!" said Marx, in a stifled voice, pointing to the chamber of his wife. "I am at your disposition."

And leaving word to explain temporarily his absence, he went forth, casting a last look at his sad home. Graziella entered at the same moment. Misfortune, when it does not destroy the intelligence of a precocious nature, develops it to an unnatural extent.

Childhood, which is born for joy, disappears in the contact with suffering. Graziella, understanding all, precipitated herself down the stairs, arriving in the street just as they were shutting the carriage door, and followed, running bareheaded after the corriage, which rapidly rolled away.

The passers-by stopped in astonishment, and did not even try to stay this light arrow darting through the air, which overcame

every obstacle, and, following her with their eyes as a meteor, they asked each other what this could mean.

She arrived thus, breathless and exhausted, at the same time as the carriage glided between the sentinel and the jailor, entered unperceived before her father and the guards, and demanded mercy with so much energy, that they took pity on her despair, and conducted her to the parlor of the director.

"Sir, my dear good sir," cried she; "it is my father! and my mother is dying; pity! pi——!"

The word expired on her lips in a supreme sob, and she fell to the ground, shattered by an awful convulsion. The director's wife, attracted by all this noise, entered in great haste, treated the child with all possible care, and finally succeeded in restoring her to consciousness, asking her repeatedly how she felt.

Not a word, not a sound, the great tears streamed down her rosy cheeks; her supplicating eyes were fixed on the charitable woman, but not a word, nothing! The intense grief had left too deep a wound in this budding organization, henceforth doomed to silence and suffering.

How could this new affliction, more such than any other, be hidden from the poor father? The wife of the director, (and there are everywhere to be found generous hearts), after having taken all necessary precautions, reconducted the little mute to her mother. She was so touched with the state of destitution of this sad dwelling, that she placed a nurse and a physician with the sick woman. But alas! all her efforts were useless, and the mother of Graziella expired a few days after, totally ignorant of the new misfortunes which had visited her family. It was then that the directress conducted Graziella to the Convent of the Augustinians, where she herself had been brought up, for she knew she could rely upon the solicitude of the good Superior.

A month passed thus; then one day the director of the prison received, in an anonymous letter from Italy, the necessary sum to pay the capital and expenses of Marx's affair. After attending to the formalities, he hastened to announce to the artist that he was free, preparing him at the same time for the fatal news which he was yet to hear.

Marx sought in vain to discover from whence this unhoped-for succor came. He

arrived at his house under the most cruel apprehensions, scarcely enjoying his liberty, which was of short duration, for he fell into a state of languor, and soon succumbed beneath the weight of suffering, repeating continually the name of Graziella.

It was thus that the little dumb girl found herself, at twelve years of age, alone and forsaken in the world. Will you now pardon the poor child for having become ugly, awkward and stubborn! The maternal care of the good nun had no effect on this nature, embittered by despair, by her infirmities, and by the mockery of the children, which was often cruel, through thoughtlessness and inexperience. It was thus that all grace, youth and vivacity had disappeared to make place for a state of prostration and insensibility.

But a look from heaven, a look from the soft Mignon had penetrated to the bottom of this wrung heart, and had rekindled a spark of life. A vibrating voice had pronounced with ineffable tenderness the sacred word, the word *par excellence*, the word by which one hopes, the word of *Mother*, and despair was vanquished. The ice which bound this little heart was melted by this magic ray, and the

poor orphan was by this single word again brought back to the world of the living. And an echo had repeated, not from her lips, but from the bottom of her warmed and resuscitated heart: *Mother! Mother!*

VI.

THE ANGLING.

According to popular belief, there are sinister stars which spread their fatal influences thro' the atmosphere as soon as their wan and dreaded rays appear on the horizon. There are perfidious plants, whose brilliancy attracts and captivates, whose perfume intoxicates and causes sleep, and whose sap is sour and fatal.

There are also perverse natures, which are as emanations of the genius of evil, which spread their destructive influence over all that surrounds or touches them. These beings, often endowed with a fatal power, pass like a curse over the earth, living only in selfishness and hatred; like the burning lava which sweeps o'er the golden harvest, they leave behind them

but desolation and ruin. They would almost create a doubt of divine justice, if, according to the views of Providence, they did not, perhaps, serve as a contrast and trial for that virtue whose triumph they often prepare.

Woe be to those who fall by surprise into the claws of these pitiless vultures! Let them not call upon a heart, where the heart is wanting; let them flee or die! But if they yield, the wicked one will repose himself conquerer on the fresh grass of their graves, as cold and impassible as the petrified lava on the harvest it has destroyed.

In the narrowest part of the Rue du Sentier, there was formerly, at the end of a court, a sombre-looking store, devoid of all appearance of luxury, but in which, however, an extensive commerce of precious stuffs was carried on. There were stored together the richest productions of the world; the cashmeres of India; the silks of Italy; the carpets of Turkey; the gold and silver cloth fabricated at Lyons; the fine tissues of the north of France, and the beautiful shawls of Borneo.

The chief of this house (so modest in appearance, and so powerful by its immense negotiations and its long standing), was named

Aimé Crevecœur. He was the successor of the Crevecœurs, whose name from father to to son was known in the annals of commerce; and, although their name was not preceded by the prefix of nobility, the Crevecœurs, by their proverbial honesty, generosity and importance, found themselves without opposition at the head of the commercial aristocracy of the Rue du Sentier. The time had not yet come when a misplaced exhibition of borrowed luxury and pomp, which deceived no one, was to attract and detain the crowd. An immense custom remained attached to these ancient establishments, which can be called "houses of confidence," words which meant something then, although they were not written over the door, and which have been since so misused. Aimé Crevecœur was then a man, still young, with much refinement, and hiding under an air of coldness a heart both tender and easy to move. He had married the daughter of a rich merchant of Lyons, who had brought an immense fortune to this already affluent house.

The young woman was intelligent and agreeable; but from her simplicity, her gentleness, and the ardor with which she tried to

render herself useful, who could have recognized a millionaire? She received with much grace and politeness the women of the world, who often hid their embarrassed circumstances under a deceptive appearance, and under a shade of superciliousness which many fine ladies consider in good taste.

Crevecœur, blessed with every advantage of fortune, enjoying a high commercial consideration, happy in the social peace of his family, felt his felicity doubled when a last gift of heaven perfected his worldly hopes; a charming creature, impatiently hoped for, came to complete his home, and enliven still more his blessed hearth. He called his daughter Theresa, the name of his fond wife.

Every grace and every beauty seemed united in this lovely miniature which was born beneath the smile of heaven. Nothing was omitted either for eyes or heart in the charming progress of childhood, which develops and unravels itself, so to speak, like a rosebud at the breath of morning.

Oh, young mother! keep her near you, hold her well on your heart, like a bridal bouquet, this fresh blossom which heaven sends you, or else you would not be a mother. Hold her

tight in your arms, this little angel which God confides to you, or else He will, perhaps, say: "She was not a mother, and the angel will fly away."

Yes, in this merchant's house, at the end of the narrow, damp Rue du Sentier, in the midst of the vulgar cares of business, poetry had descended with love and beauty. Crevecœur reveled in this ineffable sight, one more ravishing than all that the heart can imagine: a young and tender mother holding in her arms a lovely child, which seemed an emanation of heaven.

In admiring these large blue eyes, this angelic smile, this sweet carnation, and these outlines as pure as those which Raphael seeks in his most sublime creations, the young mother sometimes said with pride and emotion:

"Oh, my friends! she is too beautiful for this world!"

Indeed, that was the first impression produced at the sight of little Theresa; it was the surprise which one would feel at the apparition of a supernatural being. It seemed as if this radiant countenance lighted up all that surrounded it, and spread thro' every heart the charm which was the essence of its existence.

It was another thing, when leaving the lap of her mother, she commenced to walk and talk. Where did that light step come from, if not from the invisible wings which still bear her up, and made her glide over the ground? From whence came that heavenly voice? It came from the heart, and went to the heart, and was still more captivating when she commenced to grow, and to talk; when she revealed all the treasures of her little soul; when she became for her mother a graceful and tender companion.

How proud he was, Aimé Crevecœur, when on the promenade he held the hand of Theresa, when the passers-by, particularly mothers and children, paused to contemplate this touching physiogomy, to comprehend the mysterious charm of the angel, and repeated to themselves: "How beautitul she is!" She also, the little Theresa, she already understood the joy and charm which she spread around her, but she was neither embarrassed nor vain; no more vain than the brilliant rose before which one stays, saying: "How beautiful it is!"

But enough, enough joy! happy family, pass on to others the cup of happiness, so that

each one may at least moisten their lips. Already, yes already, it is your turn to suffer! The funeral bell has rung. It is the young mother who has died, carrying with her a child who never has seen the light. Crevecœur, in the midst of his riches, felt himself as unhappy and as despairing as the poorest of the poor. Theresa was five years old; who would protect this frail creature; who would teach her; and, above all, who would love her? (Nothing replaces a mother.) . . .

He tried to recommence with business, to give himself up with ardor to his speculations; he tried to travel, after having confided his child, his treasure, to sure hands; but everything recalled him again to Theresa, and with her, he felt still more the immense desolation which the mother of the family had left on the domestic hearth.

Two years thus passed without bringing any consolation to the wound of his heart. His sole solace was sometimes to succor the afflicted—to be a sympathizer with every grief, in remembrance of his dear wife.

One day an urgent call of business obliged him to leave home again, to go to the aid of the chief of an important manufactory, an hon-

orable man, who was, for the moment, in great distress. He could not, however, separate himself from his dear little Theresa, but, surrounding her with every care, and accompanied by a devoted servant, started off with her for the manufactory of Mr. Morin, situated in one of the rich and smiling valleys of Normandy, beyond Ronen.

He was received as a savior, for he immediately furnished to Mr. Morin the means of re-establishing himself, at the moment when his ruin was certain and imminent. He also brought him, besides, important orders, which enabled the merchant to keep and support his population of workmen. But even the outpourings of gratitude could not make Crevecœur forget his grief. He still wept for his Theresa, so soon returned to heaven, and above all for the little Theresa, who was left on earth with him for her only support. He felt his energy give way, and he himself had need of a guide and support. Notwithstanding his indifference to all around him, he could not see without emotion the friendship and adoration that the charming Theresa had won for herself from her entry into the manufactory, and above all, the profound pity which

Miss Susanna, eldest daughter of Mr. Morin, showed by her affecting looks. She was a tall young girl of twenty-two years, with hair blacker than the raven's wing; with haughty countenance, flashing and fascinating eyes, and knowing pretty well how to make the best use of her advantages.

How many times had Crevecœur caught her holding the beautiful child in her arms, forming by the very opposition of these two natures an admirable group! Then Susanna would appear very much affected and embarrassed, and would leave the child, holding her handkerchief to her eyes. Crevecœur himself could not understand the sentiment which seemed to raise up from the bottom of his heart, when he saw this charming woman's form, with her finely proportioned arms—a refuge—a sort of new cradle for his Theresa, his beloved angel.

He avoided the family gatherings, and wandered often at night through the long winding alleys of the great park, which extended from the end of the meadows to the foot of the wooded hills, which rose in the form of an amphitheatre. Normandy, noble and fertile province, is covered with these enchant-

ing sites, and the industry which there prospers and vivifies it, takes nothing away from the charm of this calm nature, but lends it a new interest by the different thoughts which the spectacle of its activity brings forth. The park was crossed by a little river, which wound gracefully round the hill, and poured into the rich valley the waters which fertilized the plain, and which were used by the factory.

Susanna knew, perhaps, that Crevecœur was fond of this walk, for she sometimes strolled there, in a pensive mood, and seemed to avoid him, by quickly leaving when she found herself, as if by chance, in his presence.

On a beautiful Summer evening, the little Theresa, captivated by the gambols of a brood of young ducks, was bending over the bank of the river, in which a grown person could run no risk, but where a child could easily perish, if not rescued. How came she there, this little creature? Who had thus forgotten and exposed her?

"Unhappy child!" screamed Miss Susanna, with a piercing voice, and rushed towards her.

Theresa, startled, stretched out her arms to

catch hold of a branch, lost her balance, and fell, with a loud cry. The intrepid Susanna threw herself into the water without hesitation, caught up the poor child, covered with mud and weeds, and standing up in the water, which came to her waist, resisted the current which swept against her. She raised the child out of the water, and, pressing her to her heart, cried for help in a desperate voice, for it was, perhaps, difficult for her to mount without assistance up the rocky bank.

He who first heard this cry of grief, and who rushed in haste, was the unhappy father.

"She is alive!" cried Susanna, covering the child with kisses. "Have no fear; I saw her fall in from a distance; she was not two seconds in the water; she is alive! Do not tremble so, bnt help me out!"

Crevecœur, beside himself, and paler than death, received in his arms the insensible child, who began to revive, laid her with care on the grass, and offering both hands to Susanna, he helped her out of the water, she dripping and wet, happy and proud of her heroic act. The brilliancy of her complexion heightened this vigorous beauty, which would doubtless have captivated Crevecœur, if he could have

thought of anything else than the danger of his child.

As soon as Susanna was out of the river, without considering her toilette, without listening to all that Crevecœur tried to tell her in his gratitude, she took Theresa in her arms, commenced undressing her, and sent authoritatively the father to get clothes and assistance from the house.

"Go quickly!" said she to him; "you can tell me all that later; or rather, wait--stay here!"

Crevecœur stood motionless, already yielding to the influence of this powerful voice, to this angelic will which was perhaps to govern him.

Susanna caught up with energy the shawl which she had thrown on the border of the river before going in; and with the solicitude of a tender mother, wrapped in it the shivering child, who was recovering its senses, and who smilingly embraced her.

"Now, take your child," said she, "and run to the house. We will put her in a warm bed, and nothing more will come of it."

"And you, dear child; dear, rescuing angel!" said Crevecœur, in a voice trembling with gratitude.

"Well, I have taken a cold bath, which is very healthy, and I am going in with you, so let us be off; but don't look at me in that way, and take care of our child, which you are carrying."

How these little words, *our child*, dropped by the merest chance, touched Crevecœur to the depths of his heart! He cast a look at Susanna, as if to entreat her to attach a meaning to these words: *our child;* but Susanna was looking at the scenery. He admired so much force and devotion, joined to such simplicity; he pensively contemplated this powerful nature, this superb beauty with the step of a queen, which bent the tall meadow flowers beneath her streaming dress, while seeming to be solely occupied with Theresa.

Was it not a grand triumph for the valiant Susanna to enter the house with the child she had saved from an inevitable death? with the father to whom she had restored his dearest, his only treasure? Had she not done more by this beautiful act, than Crevecœur could have done by a mere advancement of money?

Susanna wished to install herself at the bedside of *her* child, and so pass the night there.

"Go and rest," said she to Crevecœur;

" men are not fit for all these little cares; you see your child is very comfortable. Be easy, I will not leave her an instant, and shall see you to-morrow."

Indeed, the pretty Theresa, nicely warmed in a good bed, felt no pain whatever. She soon dropped into a deep sleep, without letting go the protecting hand of Susanna.

The following days, Crevecœur, pensive and silent, kept his eyes fixed on Susanna, who did not appear to observe him. She left Theresa no more; but appeared more attached to her since the adventure of the river, and obtained permission to have the child sleep in her room —it was a real adoption.

Had Susanna then divined that, for a generous heart, the greatest seduction is devotion and sympathy? Did she know, like the bird catcher, that to get the old bird, you must first catch the young? However, Crevecœur thought he saw in the tender friendship which Susanna bestowed upon Theresa, a feeling of pity for himself and his isolation; and this sentiment appeared to him all the more probable, as Susanna tried doubtless to hide it from him in avoiding all *tête-à-tête*.

One day as Susanna (like a beautiful Ma-

donna of Titian), was holding in her arms the graceful child, under one of the garden trees, Crevecœur approached and said:

"Susanna, what will I do when you are no longer there to attend to my child? And Theresa, who will love you when we shall have gone?"

"Do you wish to engage me as governess?" said Susanna, gaily, with a provoking look.

"Have you not yet understood me, Susanna?" said Crevecœur, sadly, and taking her hand, "from the first day that I saw you hold my child in your lap, and embrace her, did I not divine that you alone could be her mother? Has not my look already told you so? But since you have saved her, God also must have made you feel it; she is yours, Susanna; will you already abandon her?"

"Don't speak in that way," said Susanna, appearing very much moved; "do not pain me so. Have I not done all in my power to avoid this interview? If I always avoided you, do you now understand why? Never speak to me of these impossible projects," said she, (turning away her head, and putting her hands to her eyes): have pity!"

"Are you not free," said Crevecœur, "and

the mother of Theresa, does she not approve of what I do, if she can hear me, when I wish to give as second mother to my child, she who has saved her life—she who loves her with a heart so tender?"

"Yes, I love her," said Susanna, with warmth; "I love her!" Then, convulsively grasping the hand of Crevecœur, and putting her finger on her lips, as if to beg of him to say no more, she ran off.

"Why does she not want to be my mother any more?" said Theresa, weeping. "Let us stay here, then. What would we do without her?"

Crevecœur, shaken by the tears of his cherished child, tried to console her, but found for himself no consolation; he could only attribute the refusal of Susanna to a sentiment of extreme delicacy, for he knew she was almost totally without fortune; she was the eldest of a numerous family, and her father could doubtless only give her an insignificant dower.

This disinterestedness augmented his esteem still more, to which he involuntarily added, perhaps, a warmer and tenderer sentiment. He resolved to address himself to Mr. Morin.

"My dear friend," said he, "you pretend that I have done you a great service, while I deserve really no praise, for, from all that I have seen, I am convinced that my funds are in good hands, and that you will soon have re-established your fortune. But if your gratitude weighs upon you, and it you wish to be relieved from it, you can do so from this hour. Give me your Susanna, for we can no longer live without her. Give, as a mother to my child, the one whom Providence has pointed out to us, in placing the life of Theresa in her hands, and we will thus strengthen the ties of our unalterable friendship.'

"Do you dream of such a thing, Crevecœur!" said Morin, rising, as if to put an end to the consternation. "Do you mean Susanna, who has nothing, to marry a millionaire? Why, my friend, you will find in the neighborhood of the Rue du Sentier, fifty heiresses, amongst whom, in your magnificent position, you need only to choose. You have saved me, and now you expect me to inveigle you into an unprofitable marriage. No, you shall not have my daughter. Besides, pardon me the expression, it is still to be learned whether she would have you, for she is rather

romantic, and we cannot influence her in the least."

"Do not disturb yourself about that," said Crevecœur; "if she is not easy to manage, she will manage us, and we feel happier for it. But you, Morin, you intend to refuse me your daughter; you intend to let us go. See what a condition my poor Theresa is in. Shall I then have to regret all my life the visit I have made to your family?"

"All that I can do," said Morin, after having consulted his wife, and a little dazzled by the enormous advantages of this unexpected proposition, "all that I can do, is to prevent your committing an absurdity; but as for assisting you, do not count upon me. You know my means; Susanna has nothing, that is all I can tell you."

Affairs had turned, then, to the satisfaction of Crevecœur, and to that of her he already loved more than he supposed. The next day he found himself again in the garden, and in Susanna's path, just at the moment she wished, apparently, to avoid him.

"Susanna, dear Susanna," said he, arresting her steps, "why do you fly from me? Have you then any other serious motive for

repulsing me? for he who would consider your pecuniary position, would be unworthy of you. Your father himself gives you to me, but it is you who fly from me; it is you, Susanna, who cannot decide to love us."

The countenance of Susanna lightened with a radiant joy.

"My father," said she, "is it my *father* who accords you my hand?"

And she leaned confidingly on his heart.

"I love you," said she, in a low, trembling voice. "I loved you, Crevecœur; did you not know it—could you not guess it?" And she fixed on him an ardent look.

Crevecœur, beside himself with joy, embarrassed by the fire of that eye, pressed her with delight to his heart.

The happy man, or rather the man who thought himself happy, returned to the house with Susanna and his daughter, and presented his promised wife to the assembled household, invoking the promise which had been made him, not to oppose his wishes.

Susanna appeared so moved, so joyous and so tender; she understood how to feed in so many ways the growing passion of Crevecœur,

that, to satisfy each one, and to calm so much impatience, the marriage was hastened, and solemnized, after a short absence of Creve cœur, at the house of Mr. Morin, who gave a splendid entertainment, at which the charming Theresa shone like a little star.

Crevecœur, after having showered the sisters of Susanna with presents, and having left amongst the workmen many marks of his generosity, took leave of the family, and returned full of hope to his house in the Rue du Sentier.

But the superb Susanna entered into the possession of her new domain, dragging with her two shackled slaves, and holding well in her nets the two golden fish which had al lowed themselves to be caught in the little river!

VII.

THE POISON.

Are there no other poisons than those which ooze from venomous trees; than those which are hidden in the bowels of the earth, or that which is caused by the bite of the serpent? Oh! yes, there is another more sure and more subtle; it leaves no accusing trace in the veins of its victim, and the man of science would seek in vain for its antidote. The laws are powerless against him who knows how to administer with prudence this poison, whose receipt is easy, and whose effects are infallible.

The venom which alone makes as many ravages as all the curses which afflict humanity—you know it well—it is *selfishness*—the adoration of *self*.

Selfishness, which is the contrary of generosity and of love, is the active messenger of every evil, and the seven capital sins are merely its adornments. He who does all for

others, finds the beautiful and the true; he has only to follow the divine light, and let himself be guided by his heart, which never deceives him.

Under this inspiration, *love*, taken in the most noble meaning of this divine word, begets love, and the angels themselves rejoice; but he who desires all for himself, can only create around him the emptiness and coldness of the grave. In nature all is effusion; has not the poet written:

"The sun does not say: I will keep my light;
The river does not say: I will keep my waters;
The orange-tree rolls its fruit on the grass;
The vervain pours out its entire soul in its perfume."

One must descend to the last grade of the class of created beings to find the hard, impassible rock. Man can only make use of it by breaking it.

We have seen in the blessed Convent of the Augustinians, calm, order, serenity, and every good obtained without other resources than love; let us also see what a happy and enviable position can become under the influence of the destructive—*Self*.

And for that, we have only to follow the

glorious Susanna on her entrance into the house of Crevecœur, into the modest store in the Rue du Sentier.

Susanna Morin's was not a vulgar ambition; she knew how to wait. The serpent knows also how to fascinate by its look, and so envelop in its subtle folds, like a caress, the victim it intends to stifle; but let us not attribute to Susanna so guilty a premeditation.

The unhappiness of others was not her end —it was but the means of reaching it; she wished to enjoy herself, and had no other instinct.

It was, therefore, with a countenance both frank and full of kindness, that she received the ready homage of the entire Crevecœur establishment, where her grand airs made a great sensation. Although the apartments which were reserved for her were far from pleasing her, she appeared charmed with everything; but she observed all, and made her resolutions and arrangements in silence.

Although the servants were aged and too simple for her taste, she complimented them on their fidelity, for they had all served the first wife of Crevecœur, and had mourned for her well; but at the same time, she intended

to throw aside all this mummery eventually. She was thinking of a fashionable maid, some footmen of irreproachable figure, and above all, a chief cook of the highest ability: that was her ideal. She was smiling and affable with the relations and friends who were introduced to her, but said to herself, that, with a fortune such as chance had placed at her disposal, or rather one which she had gained by her manœuvering, she could procure for herself friends far more amiable, or at least, more brilliant.

However, nothing betrayed her designs, and when she pressed to her heart the confiding Theresa, holding the hand of her husband, Crevecœur could believe that his happy days had returned.

She knew how to portray every shade of a lively and tender passion, said she was very happy, yielded every point, declared all things indifferent to her, and yet managed everything to the attainment of her own ends.

She gained still more empire, when her state of languor and weakness announced to Crevecœur that she bore a symbol of their union. She leaned on his arm, was unhappy by a moment's absence; in fact, he was her humble slave and attentive admirer.

She passed whole days reclining on a soft sofa, doing little else than surrounding herself with every luxury.

Theresa, still young, was already her devoted handmaiden, and she did not fail to employ her on every occasion. At the sight of this beauty, however, which developed itself in all its splendor, in all its charm, drifting shades of ill-humor began to cross the brow of Susanna, and to foretell the coming storm. Sometimes she sent Theresa away without motive, loading her with reproaches, roughly forbidding her entrance, wishing no other care than that of Crevecœur, who made a thousand endeavors to quiet her caprices, and commenced with patience the readings which she asked for, but did not listen to.

During the intervals of these attacks, she enjoyed grand receptions, splendid dinners, brilliant *fêtes*, at which she presided in extravagant toilettes, showing off to full advantage her beautiful arms and swan-like beauty. But when she failed to attract sufficient attention, and when a young and graceful woman, introduced into the house, captivated the assemblage by her talents or wit, a sudden attack or an improvised swoon soon put Crevecœur in

mind that she was the only one with whom he must occupy himself, and that he must only exist for her.

Each new born child brought into the house levies of chambermaids and nurses, which the indolent Susanna did not trouble herself to take charge of. Crevecœur governed this woman's department in the same spirit of wisdom and order that had ruled his business, and absorbed by his cares, as well as by the adoration he was obliged to render to his idol, he neglected the superintendence of the Crevecœur firm, and forgot his friends, who, on their part, no longer dared to visit this house, where they always arrived so *mal à propos*.

His only amusement was to collect a few works of art that he was fond of; generous Crevecœur found therein occasion to encourage some young artists, as we have seen at the commencement of this story; but in surrounding Susanna with these choice works, he could not count upon sympathy from his family, for this thoroughly commonplace woman neither could nor would understand anything of an ideal charm, and held in contempt everything which spoke to the heart alone.

The state of melancholy in which Susanna

excelled, caused serious uneasiness to the too tender and too sincere heart of Crevecœur, who, already once struck by misfortune, foresaw, in the least indisposition, a fatal attack, and redoubled his care, attention and devotion. Susanna draped herself in her vapory dressing gowns of muslin, which set off and increased her beauty, and lying languidly on her sofa, was served apart in her own chamber; she could no longer take part in the concerns of her family, and increased more and more the isolation around her.

In a few years four weak little girls had successively increased the family. The ambitious Susanna had always hoped for a son, on whom she expected to fix the preference of Crevecœur, and to make him forget a little the natural predilection which the angelic beauty and grace of Theresa inspired; the jealous mother yielded to her ill-humor at seeing herself thus thwarted in all her plans.

When they presented to her, at certain hours, her troop of little children, who, always confided to mercenary care, possessed neither charm nor grace, whose features were vulgar, who quarreled and screamed around her, and who called her the *lady*, she looked at this nu-

merous progeny with disgust and discouragement, blamed Theresa for every fault in their toilette; and, involuntarily comparing the triumphant beauty of her stepdaughter with the vulgarity of these little creatures, she would dismiss them all in a fit of anger.

Then she would remain plunged in the most sombre reflections. There was one bitter thought which was continually before her, and constantly undermined her. Theresa would be rich, much richer than her own children; for, besides the share of the common inheritance, she would have all the fortune of her mother; she would add to the advantage of rare beauty, that of a considerable dower.

To compensate herself, Susanna determined at least to enjoy the entire splendor of her fortune. She prepared a revolution in the habits of the Crevecœur establishment; and, as everything bent before her will, or rather before her skill, whatever she wanted came to pass.

She had not much difficulty in persuading her doctor that the air of the Rue du Sentier was bad for her, and that it was the cause of the miserable condition of her children; soon, by the order of the Faculty, a sumptuous

house in the quarter of the *grand monde* was chosen in which to establish this numerous family, who were cramped and incommoded in the court, within the shadow of the commercial house.

Crevecœur, blinded, shrank from no expense to satisfy these new exigencies. But to keep pace with the elegant friends whose luxury she envied, Susanna must have a carriage, with all the increase of servants and expenses which were the consequences. Why could she not also have her country seat? What could be refused her? Was she not beautiful enough, was she not tender enough for Crevecœur? Did not her delicate condition require the greatest care?

Crevecœur, therefore, yielded on every point, carried away by a passion which deprived him of all power of resistance, captivated by the countless proofs of affection which were showered upon him by the adroit Susanna, who cared but for him, and who left him not an instant's peace or liberty. A fine country seat was, therefore, bought in Normandy; for the principal thing was to return as lady of the manor to the country that she had quitted with no other fortune than beauty and cleverness;

the embarrassment and poverty of her departure must be crushed by a grand and triumphant return.

The merchant, subjugated by this irresistible influence, but frightened at the future which was preparing for him, sometimes ventured to say that the resources of his commerce, which had already suffered by the change of residence, could not support this prodigality; that the dower of Theresa did not belong to him, and he must preserve from any catastrophe this large sum, for which he was responsible.

To touch upon this subject, was to kindle the rage of Susanna. She then had frightful attacks, and only came to herself to reproach Crevecœur with not finding means to provide honorably for the establishment of his family; she would then quote to him the names of merchants who, in intermeddling in financial affairs and lucrative speculations, had made colossal fortunes in very little time. Sometimes she introduced him to bankers or agents, who promised to double his fortune if he would associate himself in their dangerous traffic. Crevecœur was weak enough to enter into this path; but the peril to which he exposed him-

self, caused him to make, when too late, many bitter reflections, and the light began to enter his mind. He looked back, remembered the perfect calm of his first *ménage*, and compared it with the agitations of his present life.

He saw his poor Theresa melancholy and forsaken, appearing to have understood long before what he himself was but just beginning to feel. One day, when their eyes met with a particular expression, he clasped her in his arms.

"Poor child!" said he, without adding another word.

She embraced him, and said nothing, but these two wounded hearts had understood each other.

His old friends had deserted him; the doubtful society which Susanna attracted on certain days in her house to show off her new splendor, could not suit the taste of Crevecœur. He found there only noisy joy, and pleasures that he could not partake of; nothing for the heart, nothing for the mind, and, therefore, he kept aloof.

He met with no other sympathy than the devoted friendship of Maurice de Terrenoire, near relative of his first wife. Maurice, much

younger than Crevecœur, had been brought up by his care, looked upon him as a brother, and had formed for him an intimate and unalterable friendship. Perhaps the reader will remember having heard of him at the commencement of this story; he was the obliging friend who introduced Marx, the sculptor, to Crevecœur, and had thus procured him an assistance which was not destined to profit him long, and which, by a fatal influence, was to be the cause of his ruin.

This attachment thoroughly displeased the imperious Susanna, and she had ventured everything to bring about a coldness and rupture. After having made very gracious advances to Maurice to rally him to her interests and domineer over him, and having obtained no success, she had adopted contrary tactics. She had tried to compromise him in dark transactions, and had employed against him the odious weapon of calumny; but Maurice seemed to see nothing of all these manœuvres, and persisted alone, out of all the old friends of Crevecœur, in his visits to this desolate house, as if he had taken upon himself the secret mission of watching over this household, threatened with some unseen danger.

Maurice de Terrenoire was one of those honorable, calm and observing men, whose severe glance troubles doubtful consciences He hid with difficulty the profound interest with which the charming Theresa inspired him; she who, at the age of sixteen years, already possessed every grace of a young woman, and whose poetic beauty developed itself from day to day with a new splendor. He rarely spoke to her, and the difference of age encouraged no familiarity; but he admired her in silence, and could not keep his eyes off this lovely spectacle. Maurice, barely twenty-six years of age, had, so to speak, had no youth. He had been serious and passionately fond of the sciences from his earliest years, and was already regarded with a consideration, ordinarily only accorded to riper age. By assiduous study he had obtained a high rank in bridge and road building, and was a skillful engineer, whose last works had been noticed and complimented by the minister. Susanna, who revolted against the slightest resistance, would not confess herself beaten. She must conquer him at any price. Crevecœur must be left alone in her power. She penetrated into the thousand

labyrinthine windings which surround power; worked upon the hidden springs of diplomacy; recoiled before no influence, and by the intervention of one of these women who smuggle themselves in everywhere, she succeeded in persuading the minister that Maurice de Terrenoire desired extremely to obtain an important mission to Italy, already solicited by one of his colleagues, but that he was too proud to ask for it himself. The minister, who highly prized the capacity of Maurice, was happy to give this proof of his confidence, and hastened to send him his nomination and instructions. Maurice, very much surprised, tried in vain to get rid of his new functions.

"It is too late," said the minister; "we have counted on you; besides, this circumstance is too favorable to your interests and promotion, for me to permit you to neglect it, and you will thank me for it later."

He had to go. It was not without great regret that Maurice bade good-bye to Crevecœur. Susanna triumphed in silence, in seeing the success of her cunning; she was then to get rid of a troublesome witness, and of a far-sighted judge.

"My friend," said Crevecœur to him, tak-

ing him by the hand when they were alone, "then you are going to leave us? You have not sought my confidence, but I know that you have guessed my position. Oh, you, the only friend I have left; you who bind me by my memory to the time of my passed happiness; Maurice, I am not happy. And my dear Theresa, who I wished to protect in forming new ties, has she not suffered enough without complaint? Maurice, you are going away, and a fatal presentiment tells me I shall soon need your assistance."

"Entirely and always at your service," said Maurice; "but chase away these sad thoughts, and take courage. It is blindness which has ruined you, Crevecœur; if you see your danger, it is already nearly avoided. It is not for me to show you what you should do, but you need *energy*. Take care, and be watchful."

"I have lost my energy," said Crevecœur, in a discouraged voice; "my strength is leaving me, my friend, and everything appears difficult for me. I feel myself governed by a fatal influence. Yes, it is too late to resist the authority I have permitted to rule. The least check, I feel it, can now overthrow me. But there is above all an uneasiness that tor-

ments me; if I succumb, what will become of Theresa? Her youth, her beauty, are dangerous for her. You know it, I feared formerly to leave her without a mother; but to you alone I can say it, Maurice, I fear still more now. Yes," said he, making an effort, "I have made too late this discovery which is killing me; it is not with a mother that I leave her, it is"———

"But you are here to defend her," said Maurice, interrupting him.

"My friend, my moments are precious," said Crevecœur, "we are, perhaps, observed, for my life is exposed to every gaze; take these papers quickly, I cannot place them in better hands; promise me not to open them until you get the news of my death; I hope, Maurice, you will do what I ask of you. I have counted on you, and possess no other friend."

And he took his hand, unable to continue.

"I will bring you back these papers on my return, my friend," said Maurice; "you alarm yourself without serious motive. In any case, *count upon me;* I owe you all; my life is yours."

Maurice was not a demonstrative man, but

he was a sure, devoted friend, and his word was sacred.

Crevecœur appeared less uneasy when he knew his last wishes were in such pure hands. Maurice quitted him, tenderly embracing him, slowly shaking the hand of Theresa, in interrogating her by a look which expressed all his sentiments of protection and respect.

"Thank you!" said Theresa, looking at him with gratitude; and there was a great deal of expression in the sound of this voice and moist eye.

Crevecœur found himself more solitary and unhappy than ever after the departure of Maurice. He could not take Theresa for a confidant, not wishing to deprive her of what might be left her in the way of illusions as to the affection of her stepmother, and already instil distrust into this soul so loving and tender. There are presentiments which never deceive. The perilous negotiations in which Crevecœur had entered, under the influence, and almost under the orders of Susanna, to meet the enormous expenses of his house, and to rapidly increase his fortune, pre-occupied him incessantly. He no longer felt his mind strong enough to support the circumstances;

new exigencies constantly appeared. An unexpected mishap, which was liable to put in danger the heretofore spotless honor of his house, seriously affected his health. Theresa, watchful of his welfare, did not wish to leave him an instant; but her stepmother often succeeded in getting rid of her, by occupying her with a thousand cares for the young family.

One day, seeing Crevecœur quite unwell, Susanna made bold to ask him, indirectly, whether he had made his arrangements, and, considering herself only, even in such a sad situation, she gave him to understand how very uncertain her position would be if he did not take care to provide for it.

Crevecœur, already weakened by so many previous emotions, and struck by this last trait of selfishness, made no reply, and fell in to a great state of prostration. Susanna, frightened by the evidence of suffering, withdrew without saying a word. When Theresa entered the chamber of her father, she was terrified at the state in which she found him, prostrate in an arm-chair, pale, without movement, covered with perspiration, and breathing with difficulty. She thought at first he was insensible; but she soon remembered that his

eyes alone still had life, and were fixed on her with tenderness and energy.

"My father, my dear father, what is the matter?" cried she; "has the doctor been sent for?"

"No!" said her father, with a motion of the head.

"What do you want? what do you want?" said Theresa, tenderly, on seeing the supplicating expression of his eyes; "have you anything to say to me—to me alone?"

"Yes," said Crevecœur, by nodding his head with difficulty.

"Oh, speak, my dear father! I will do all that you will tell me. I know all; I have understood all; I have felt all that you suffer; you may tell everything to *me!*"

Crevecœur made vain efforts; he could not speak a word, being already struck with the commencement of an attack. But his eyes were always fixed with the greatest vivacity on his daughter, and from thence, describing a circle, were directed towards one of the walls of the room. Theresa turned her eyes in the same direction, seeking what could fix the glassy gaze of her father, and timidly pointing to a miniature hanging near the fireplace:

"Is it that?" said she.

"Yes," returned Crevecœur, by an unmistakable nod of the head.

"That's it, dear father, that's it; you wish me to listen to Mr. Maurice as I would listen to you; to have as much confidence in him as I would in you, and that he be a brother to me. Say, is not that what you mean?"

The face of Crevecœur revived an instant, and making a final effort, he feebly murmured, "*Yes*," looking at Theresa with the tenderest possible expression; then this look became dim, and he fell back in his chair.

He already existed no longer—the work of destruction was accomplished. The poison of selfishness had penetrated through and through his veins, but the medical man was not destined to find any trace of it.

Theresa fell on her knees before him, called him in vain, held his already stiffened hands, and, no longer able to doubt of her misfortune, fell fainting at his feet, without possessing the force to call for assistance.

A serving maid, entering by chance, found the father and daughter in this condition, thought them both dead, and rushed to inform her mistress, employing every precaution so as not to alarm her sensibility.

The nearest doctor, called in haste, declared it was too late; that Crevecœur had been dead half an hour from a frightful stroke of apoplexy.

"As for this young girl," said he, after having contemplated with pity this beautiful reclining marble, like a daughter of Niobe, "it is nothing; but take care of her, she needs the greatest management."

He made a few prescriptions and left.

VIII.

THE MARTYRDOM.

THE mask falls! Susanna is no longer the languishing and exhausted wife, passing her life breathing salts on a sofa by the dim light of a *boudoir;* she rises as Sixtus the Fifth rose when he threw away his distaff. She is cured; she is strong; she is powerful; now everything shall bend before her. She is queen.

It is to her that belong the country seat, the town house, and hotel Crevecœur; she thinks so at any rate; she has well earned them. And Theresa also belongs to her—to her, with neither succor or defence.

The unhappy child was not in a state to comprehend what passed around her. She had indeed seen a priest sitting at the head of a corpse; she had seen men dressed in black pass out, bearing a heavy burden. She remained in her immobility like a statue of suffering; she did not even know how to weep.

"Enough!" said Susanna, passing near her,

"your grief, doubtless, is no more profound than mine, and yet I manage to contain myself."

"I know the obedience I owe you, Madame," said Theresa, making an effort. "I shall regulate my conduct on yours. If you do not permit a daughter to weep for her father, I will hide my tears as you hide yours. You have only to command, Madame; I know my duty, and will prove to you my submission."

"We will see," said Susanna; "I shall judge you by your actions, and not by your words."

Susanna's first care was to send for her lawyer, and shut herself up with him.

Theresa tried to overcome her grief, or at least not to let herself be crushed by it. She wished to trace out for herself a line of conduct; she remembered the recommendations of her father, and found a feeble consolation in thinking that there was left her on earth a protector on whom she could count—a friend in whom her father had ordered her to have confidence as in himself—a brother who had given her his hand before leaving.

She, therefore, took confidence in God, and

said to herself that, in accomplishing all the duties that would be imposed on her; in bestowing her friendship and care on her little neglected sisters, she could still find some repose within herself, and cherish in secret her *souvenirs;* she promised to watch over herself, and to be prudent and strong.

"These are my father's children," said she to herself; "I will love them as cherished sisters, as all that remains of my dearly loved parent; the tenderness that I shall show them will, perhaps, disarm an irritation that I cannot account for."

Her time, that she formerly divided between her studies, the society of her father, and the cares of the house, she now consecrated entirely to the four little girls, always abandoned to the care of nursery maids.

This tall and beautiful young girl, in deep mourning garments, was continually surrounded with these four little creatures, whose future was so uncertain. It was like a young widow surrounded by her children.

She taught them how to speak well, to hold themselves properly, to be polite and gentle to each other. These little children, so long isolated, adored her, and could not do without

her; these little plants, as she cultivated them by love, became less wild.

"Where is he then, our father?" said the children; "will he soon come back?"

They knew nothing of *life;* Theresa was obliged to teach them what *death* was.

"You come from heaven," said she to them, "and if you are good and love one another, you will return to heaven, and then we will all see our good father again, who has already gone there, and who is waiting for us. But he is watching you, he always has his eyes fixed on his dear little daughters, and calls them by name. If they listen, they can still hear his voice; if they love each other, he will be pleased; but if they quarrel together, he will cry."

The little ones loved their father exceedingly, for it was from him and from Theresa, far more than from their mother, that they had always received attention and caressing tenderness. They, therefore, looked out of the window up to heaven, to try and see their father, and sometimes fancied they heard his voice.

One day, when they could not agree, the eldest said to another, looking at Theresa, and

giving up the plaything that was the object of this grave discussion :

"Don't let us quarrel, but make peace with a kiss, for there is father who is going to cry."

Theresa took care to say with them always their evening and morning prayers ; nothing is sweeter and more salutary in a family, and there always arises good influence from it. The name of her father, of her relations, and of her *friends* were never forgotten in these prayers. A rapid change was thus produced in the habits of these little children, whom kindness and gentleness already rendered more interesting.

She almost reproached herself with not having devoted her entire life to them. She forgot the thousand attentions with which she had surrounded her father, and the thousand futile occupations with which her stepmother busied her, to get rid of her; but now the widow was absorbed with inventories, lawsuits and calculations to arrive at the exact amount of her personal fortune, and she, for the first time, abandoned Theresa to her instincts of devoted sisterhood. Madame Crevecœur, furnished with the "*Code of the Widow and*

the Orphan," surrounded with law-books, which she was trying to decipher, in continual consultations with lawyers and agents, soon awoke from her illusions.

The notary had much difficulty in making her understand that, after so much extravagance, the larger portion of what remained of the fortune formerly so flourishing, represented the inheritance of Theresa alone, and that she would only have the remaining part to divide with her four children.

Another instinct, as cruel as extreme, was awakened within her at this new and unexpected announcement: it was the affection of the she-wolf for her young. One of her children was sick; she had not interested herself in the least, and Theresa was watching at the bedside of the poor little one, when Susanna entered the nursery.

"Who authorized *you*," said she, "you, Theresa, the stranger, to watch over my daughters, and in what a condition do you render me this one?"

And seizing her by the arm, she pulled her away from the bed.

"For pity's sake," said Theresa, in a low voice, "spare me at least before these children,

who love me still—am I not their sister? Besides, the soul of my father, which has hardly departed from this house, might hear us yet. These are my little sisters, madame; why doubt of my affection for them? Allow me to love them; I will do nothing without your permission. I implore you, let me accomplish the wishes of my father; I will prove to you my entire obedience."

"Was it also the wish of your, father, Miss," said Susanna, with contempt, "that placed in your chamber that which was found there?"

And she showed the miniature of Maurice.

"You are precocious, Theresa," added she, with intentional cruelty.

"Oh! madame," cried Theresa, indignantly. She then stopped, and sought vainly for a reply; she wished to say nothing of the last recommendations of her father.

"Retire to your chamber," said Susanna, coldly, "and await my orders."

Theresa left the room, giving a last look at her little sisters, who cried, and wished to follow her, and the sight of this affection augmented still more the hatred of the vindictive stepmother.

The lawyer of the family was a Mr. Renard, one of the most honorable of men, a kind and devoted friend, who had made many an effort to save Crevecœur from the precipice which was destined to prove his ruin. He had, however, continued to be the intimate counsellor of Madame Crevecœur. He let her talk, confess her plans, and even encouraged her in her ambition, as if he wished to see how far she really would go.

But was that being a sincere confidant of the intentions of Madame Crevecœur, or did he not say to himself that he could better defend the interests of the friend he had lost, by preserving the entrée into this house, whose profound iniquities he clearly saw? What induces us to believe it, is that his well known delicacy wou d have prevented his being an accomplice in any evil design; and besides, Mr. Renard was also the notary and intimate friend of Maurice de Terrenoire, and should know all that went on.

He listened, therefore, with amiability and an apparent sympathy to the complaints that Susanna was never weary of making against her stepdaughter. Numerous friends called, more for curiosity than affection, to know how

Susanna, who gave herself out as a millionaire, was getting on. She did not fail to recount how she had found in Theresa's bedroom the portrait of Mr. de Terrenoire, which had been carried off, as well as a few other small trinkets; she insinuated that Theresa had alone been present in the chamber of her father, and pretended to render her responsible for all that might be missing. The rumor of an intimacy between Theresa and Maurice soon went the rounds of this frivolous society, eager for scandal; the story was ornamented with comments, to which each narrator added his mite.

When Theresa appeared in the parlor, she was received with perfidious advances and ill-concealed smiles. Some of the women, who could not pardon her for being young, beautiful and rich, were too happy to ask her, with great show of interest, how Mr. de Terrenoire was.

We will not attempt to describe what she suffered in thus seeing the last wishes of her father treated with disrespect, and trampled under foot. Every heart will divine what this long martyrdom of the poor Theresa must have been.

Mr. Renard, the lawyer, continually assiduous with Madame Crevecœur, who could no longer do without him, had still the time to write to Maurice de Terrenoire, and had not failed to inform his friend of all that passed, or that could interest him. He had, perhaps, also received his reply and instructions. For, one day, as Susanna showed him how difficult it was for her, just leaving for the country, to take care of a young girl who could not take care of herself:

"It is not easy, I acknowledge," said the lawyer; "ah! one wants for that the good double doors of a convent--and I remember now, I have just the thing that you want—but no, on reflection, it cannot suit you."

"What then? Let us hear it?" said Susanna, with vivacity, "for I really do not know what to do with her!"

"Ah! I know of a convent where the girls are tightly kept," said the lawyer, "and there is, perhaps, the objection that Theresa might get there the taste for a nun's vocation; for I have observed in her character a little enthusiasm on this point, and if you really wish to marry her to any one, you would, perhaps, be committing an imprudence. After all," added

he, carelessly, "if she *should* become a nun, that is her lookout, and your children will not certainly be the losers by it."

"But I do not say no," said Susanna, with indifference. "There is really some sense in your suggestion, and then, in taking this decision by your advice, I will have all the less responsibility. I rely entirely on you."

"Very well," said Renard, "try and decide her; I flatter myself that I can give you a letter of recommendation which will open every door for you."

Susanna foresaw with secret joy the great advantage of getting rid of the disagreeable presence of Theresa, whose beauty, riches and submission, even, offended her; resistance would have given her a better excuse for her fits of anger. Besides, there was still left her the happy chance of her taking the veil, and thus abandoning all of her fortune to her sisters.

She called in Theresa, and speaking to her with gentleness, contrary to her custom, she informed her of the proposition of Mr. Renard.

"Dear madame," said Theresa, supplicatingly, "do not separate me from my sisters—they are all that is left me of my father!

What have I done to deserve your anger? I will help you, madame, to take care of these dear children; you cannot always occupy yourself with them. You know the youngest is in delicate health; your servants cannot have for your children the same affection as yourself. I will replace you sometimes; I beseech you do not separate me from the family!"

"You consider yourself indispensable, perhaps?" said Madame Crevecœur; "undeceive yourself, however. A mother can take your place. Reflect, Theresa; I will do you no violence. Go, we will speak of it again."

A short time after, Theresa stood in the chamber of her stepmother, who had sent for her, and was giving her orders.

"Don't you hear?" said she; "look for my scissors, which are on the mantel-piece."

Theresa, always ready, went in the direction ordered; but in taking up the scissors, she involuntarily cast her eyes over an open paper, printed in large letters, on which the scissors were placed. The name of Terrenoire was the first word that met her eye.

The paper was not bordered with black, and consequently could announce no bad news.

Why, then, was she obliged to lean against the mantel-piece; why did she put her hand to her burning forehead at reading these few lines:

"MADAME:—

"Madame Widow de Terrenoire has the honor to announce to you the marriage of her son, Mr. Maurice de Terrenoire, Engineer of Roads and Bridges, with Miss Mary Visconti.

"FLORENCE, June 13th, 18——"

Why was Theresa petrified at reading this?

"Well, Theresa," said the stepmother, impatiently, "did you hear me? What are you dreaming of?"

"I am dreaming of——the convent where you want to send me," said Theresa, making a last effort. "Oh! how happy I should be there! I will be no more an obstacle to your plans, madame; dispose of me; I am ready to go."

"Another freak!" said the stepmother. "It is doubtless to be the last."

A few days after this interview, Theresa was introduced by the Widow Crevecœur into the parlor of the Augustinians, as we have seen at the commencement of this story.

IX.

THE GOOD GENIUS.

Enough! enough of misery, of tears, of trials, of despair, of torment; the curse has accomplished its work; let us now count the victims.

Poor Marx! What has become of your creating genius? Where have flown your illusions? How comes it that you fall expiring at the feet of your exquisite statue, of your masterpiece, which would have made your glory?

And poor little flower, young hope of your family, Graziella! You who, rapid as the wind, followed your cherished father to the doors of the prison which was almost destined to be his tomb, why are you now speechless, and why do you wander, with glazed eyes, like a spirit in the midst of the living?

Unhappy and too indulgent Crevecœur: you, the consoler of the afflicted; you who only lived for others, and always forgot your-

self, why have you descended so young into the tomb? Why do you leave without protection your beloved daughter, now exposed to every enmity? Who will bring up and protect your young family? And you, our charming Mignon, a creature so gentle, so loving and inoffensive, you who scatter everywhere on your passage, joy and happiness, have you suffered enough from calumny and contempt? Have you been enough wounded in your respect for your cherished father, in your noblest and purest affections?

Why have you all fallen?

There is no necessity for our seeking the weapon that has struck all these blows. We know it now, this implacable selfishness which nourishes itself only from bleeding hearts.

But who will dress the wounds of those who survive? Who will give them shelter? Who will bring the remedy?

It will be a noble heart. The heart that knows how to love is strong; it can not only succor the living, but also give to the dead a consolation even beyond the grave, by replacing them on earth, and fulfilling their dearest wishes. A great heart is the divine *genius*, and Maurice de Terrenoire had a great heart.

Our young engineer was at this all powerful age when, under the influence of pure inspirations, the heart overflows with inextinguishable ardor; when the torrent gushes forth its waters without counting its drops, and without foreseeing the draught which will diminish its forces and exhaust its flood. He had left home, hiding his great uneasiness, but he had not quitted France without making arrangements to be informed of all that interested his friends. From childhood he had been intimately acquainted with Marx, the sculptor. They had not ceased their intimacy on embracing different careers, and Maurice had, more than any other, appreciated the richness of this ardent nature.

In introducing the artist to his friend Crevecœur, he considered himself responsible for the result; he did not wish this assistance to become for Marx a means of ruin. As soon as he was informed of the fatal news of the death of his friend Crevecœur, and of the lawsuits which the pitiless widow was instituting against the unhappy artist, he thought it his duty to answer temporarily for the money; he, therefore, hastened to send the sum to the director of the prison. His notary, who was

his confidential agent, followed up the affair, and kept him informed of the details of its execution. Through this faithful intermediary, he heard of the new and irreparable loss he had just made of a friend of his youth, of a lifelong companion, and also of the entrance of Graziella into the Convent of the Augustinians.

He then wrote to the wife of the director of the prison—this generous woman whose heart was not yet hardened by contact with continual misfortune—to thank her for her maternal care, and to reimburse her for the expenses she had incurred with so much liberality. Then, when by authority of justice, the furniture of Marx was sold, he directed Mr. Renard to purchase for him, at any price, the entire bulk of the furniture, statues, and objects of art, and renewed the lease of the studio, so that everything might be kept in the same state until his return. Indeed, he seemed to have in this particular very decided intentions. Easier in mind, he then wished to continue his *rôle* of protector and adoptive father, and ordered his lawyer to pay regularly the board of Graziella, and to make very careful inquiries about the respectable house of the

Augustinians. He foresaw that he would, perhaps, need this refuge for the secret object of his affections, for the gentle Theresa, for the precious treasure that a father had confided to him. Deploring the imperious law of duty that kept him so long away from France, he fostered the idea of reuniting under the same roof the two forsaken beings that Providence had confided to his care. But we will never succeed in making a novel hero of Maurice; he had neither the seductions nor poetry of one, and he knew it. He was a worthy young man, who only followed the dictates of his own heart, and who simply employed in a noble manner the money already gained by his merit and unceasing toil. In our practical age, it is not impossible to meet with such natures.

Mr. Renard congratulated himself on the *rôle* he played with such success before Madame Crevecœur; he thus made discoveries which would have escaped him if his indignation had kept him aloof, and he did not fail in a regular correspondence to inform Maurice of all the persecutions of which Theresa was the object, and of the accusations with which she was loaded. Not understanding exactly

the story of the portrait, for he ignored the last conversation between Crevecœur and his daughter, Maurice read over ten times the sentence in the letter, where it was written that this miniature had been found in her possession.

It was for him an inexhaustible subject of meditation and revery, and although the future appeared uncertain and obscure to him, he wished to think of nothing around him, but only to look forward to this period so far distant.

His first care was to rescue Theresa from this house where she had suffered so much. He felt that in pretending to interfere openly, he would increase the difficulties, and raise a natural opposition on the part of the imperious widow; he, therefore, decided to act with the greatest circumspection.

Taking the excellent Mr. Renard more and more in his confidence, he induced him to suggest the convent to Madame Crevecœur, as an establishment thoroughly suited to her designs, and to let her see all the advantages which the avidity of the widow could covet.

For honest people, it is a little pastime to

fight deceivers with their own weapons. Mr. Renard, who knew the entire candor of Maurice, and who perceived, perhaps, a means of assuring the future of Theresa, entered into all his designs. The widow easily fell into the innocent trap which was laid for her, and it is then that the beautiful orphan found in the Convent of the Angustinians a secure refuge, and the repose she so much needed.

But the repose of Mignon, for now that we have conducted her to the doors of the convent, in relating the beginning of her sad history, we wish still to call her by the charming name which her companions had given her; the repose of Mignon was still troubled sometimes by her *souvenirs*. Why? she would not, perhaps, have been able to say herself.

Was it a printed letter which she had found one day, as if by chance, beneath her eye—a letter by which the marriage of Maurice was announced to Madame Crevecœur?

But no intimate friendship had ever existed between Maurice and herself, who was very cold, very reserved, and much older than she was.

It was rather an adviser—a tutor that she would find in Maurice, according to the

wishes of her father. Had she then felt a profound attachment for this beautiful and noble character, which refreshed her after all the frivolous and hostile beings she met with in her stepmother's house? Had she even the hope of being loved? Had she even dreamed of devoting her life to his? Had she sometimes imagined that the most intimate and sacred tie might one day unite forever the daughter of Crevecœur to the devoted friend of the unhappy father, and that these two lives would be passed in cultivating apart this pious remembrance?

Perhaps Mignon had had this dream, for she could not ignore her beauty, although she was no more vain of it than the flowers of the field. She had often observed the serious and dreamy look of Maurice fixed upon her, as if to question Destiny; and when she sang at the piano, before her father and Maurice, she had surprised an emotion in the latter, who, according to the pretention of a few *artistes*, declared himself indifferent, and a stranger to music; and when she had by chance taken his arm while walking, she had felt unmistakably in this circumstance an embarrassment that she experienced in no other;

she could not account to herself for the sentiment she had for Maurice, but it was certainly not what she felt for any one else.

And then, why had she herself not been informed by letter, like Madame Crevecœur, of an event so important in the life of Maurice? She sometimes felt herself hurt at this indifference; but Mignon did not know the storms of the heart. She felt no resentment, but had for the friend of her father both affection and gratitude, and always counted on him as the only support that was left her.

But her horizon was narrowed, the light of her heaven had waxed dim, and the future seemed gloomy and hopeless. She lived because she had to, but without either desire or object. If she had only thought of herself, she would have said, like Margaret of Scotland: "Out upon life, let me hear no more about it!" But, obeying her good nature, she showed no sadness, but wished, above all, to make herself beloved, and to serve others. We have, therefore, seen her immediately take the abandoned Graziella in her arms, and bring her to life, so to speak, by the most tender pity, by the charm of her words and looks, and by her soft maternal kiss.

On his part, Maurice de Terrenoire, if he had a sincere affection for Mignon, who united every charm of youth and beauty, every accomplishment of the mind, and every treasure of the heart; if she was all the more dear to him, because she was confided to him by the wishes of a father, and because she was alone in the world, and exposed to every peril; if all these motives guided his thoughts towards her, and her alone, while he wandered along the banks of the Arno, without seeing the beauties which surrounded him: if, finally, Maurice de Terrenoire loved Mignon, he would have taken great care not to let her know it. A motive of delicacy would have prevented his showing the least eagerness. Mignon had a large fortune, and the authority itself which the last directions of Crevecœur had given to Maurice, imposed the greatest reserve upon him.

As for the letter about the marriage, it had, doubtless, not been printed in Florence, where there had been no question of anything of that sort. If this was the case, the letter came from Paris, and only one copy had been made for the necessity of the case, as the business men say. It was, indeed, a perfidious weapon,

which could not compromise the enemy who made use of it.

What! Mignon, why do you complain? Your stepmother merely receives a printed announcement; it is not a letter, it is not a signature, and no one knows where it comes from. Why do you look at what is not intended for you? And besides, have you examined it well? What has become of it? It has already disappeared. You are too proud to ever allude to it—to find out the particulars, or to ask any questions. And if you feel yourself wounded by this sharp weapon, the blood will only flow in the wound, and no one will see it.

It was, therefore, according to appearances, a secret between Madame Crevecœur, who had taken no confidant in this machination, and Mignon, who, of course, said nothing. All that was very well planned.

Maurice could not even suspect so strange a perfidy. In his absence, he only thought of the two beings he had taken under his protection. He admired this power of the heart and mind that traversed space, surrounded with hidden care the loved ones, caused its influence to be felt without being seen, and

which triumphs still over difficulties it can not openly attack. He would have liked to have known whether Mignon thought sometimes of him. He had often commenced letters to her, but he could not yet decide to occupy her with himself. He, therefore, contented himself with consecrating to her all his thoughts, and recommending her to the solicitude of the excellent notary, to whom he had involuntarily unveiled all his plans. Meanwhile, he thanked God that gentle Mignon was now happy and tranquil in the Convent of the Augustinians.

X.

THE MIRACLE OF ROSES.

Do you know the country where the eglantine blossoms? Come and rest there your eyes, wearied with these sad scenes; come and heal your wounded heart. There you will find nought but smiling pictures; there you can forget the world of the wicked.

Let us enter again into the sacred refuge of piety and childhood. Let us join in the games of the young scholars, and, listening to their joyous songs and gay laughter, let us lose ourselves in this tumultuous swarm. It does not take long to find our sweet Mignon, whose graceful form moves among her companions. How she has grown and improved beneath this tutelary shelter. Her color is more brilliant, her eyes more limpid, her lips more smiling, and her step more sprightly; for she has now enjoyed for more than a year this profound repose, and has seen herself surrounded with friendly faces.

For more than a year has her softness and grace adorned this house, where her presence seems indispensable.

The Superior, Madame Theresa, touched by her sad history, the details of which she has learned through the lawyer, who often comes to inquire after Mignon, surrounds her with kind attention, and always keeps her in her own society.

But how comes it that we do not so easily find the feeble and awkward Graziella? It is, perhaps, because we cannot recognize her, for she must be there, at the side of her little mother; and look, there she is!

But what a happy change! Speech is the only faculty wanting. But it cannot be said that she is pretty; her frank features, surrounded with short curls, resembles more those of a boy than a girl; but what life in all her movements! what sprightliness in her step! what intelligence in her light eyes! Is it Mignon again who has worked this miracle? Yes, Mignon has triumphed over this indifference—has discovered a taste, a passion in Graziella; she has aided the development of her mind by taking care of her, and helping her in her first essays.

The heart is such a skillful master! Mignon, who had seriously undertaken her maternal duties, superintended the studies of Graziella, who, owing to her infirmity, required special care, and who, thanks to this encouragement, finally began to make some progress.

She made her learn her lessons, but Graziella could not repeat them like the rest. Then, Mignon would take the book, and the child would have to write from memory what she had learned. Mignon watched, overlooked no bad habits, straightened up the figure of the child, who lounged on the table, would not excuse her scrawls, and wished her to take an interest in all she did, convinced that one negligence would bring on another.

Her remonstrances were so gently made, that Graziella, after a short resistance, kissed her, as if to ask pardon, and in order to please her little mother, renewed her efforts.

What a pretty group—so natural and artless! The gravity of the young girl—the pouting air of the child, and a kiss serving from time to time as an interpreter to a precept. The artist who could have seen them thus, would have taken up his pencils to sketch the interesting scene.

Mignon sometimes got angry—yes, very angry. She had accustomed Graziella to take care of her clothes, to no longer soil her hands and face, and had already observed some progress in her little rebel.

One day Graziella commenced to write, with her hands covered with a yellowish mud, and as she had fingered her face, her forehead and cheeks were tatooed with yellow streaks. She was really frightful, and poor Mignon was discouraged.

"My child," said she, "surely, you love your mother no longer; I see it now. You will not listen to what I say; you give Mignon a great deal of trouble."

Graziella took her hand, as if to ask from whence came this reproach.

"Look at your hands, naughty child!" said Mignon. "Here, you are as untidy as the day I found you at the foot of the large plantains, with your hands in the dirt. Your dress is covered, and if you could only see your face! Go, you do not love me any more."

Graziella, miserable, knelt down to beg pardon. Then a new idea seemed to strike her. She glanced around the class-room where she was working with Mignon, and

saw they were alone. Then she made a sig nal, putting her finger on her lips, as if to beg her to say nothing, and to wait a little longer before condemning her, and ran out of the room.

Mignon was at a loss to account for her con duct, when she saw her coming back, bring ing with her a small basket, from which she took several misshapen objects, which she commenced to arrange on the table.

On close examination, Mignon, however, remarked the care and skill with which these little figures were modeled in coarse clay. One could distinguish a nun walking, with a book in her hand, which she was reading attentively. In another personage, one could not mistake the old portress, with crooked form and wrinkled face, counting her bunch of keys.

Then Graziella took with respect a little group, representing a reclining woman with a child kneeling near her, and looking at Mignon, she repeated sadly: *Mother.*

Then——there, she made a sign as if to announce something more lugubrious, and drew from the basket another object. It represented a mound of earth with some bushes of cy-

press delicately executed. The mound was surrounded with two little crosses, and Graziella, taking the hand of Mignon, made her read at the foot this inscription: "*To my father; to my mother!*" and the courageous child could hardly keep from crying.

"Poor child! poor little thing!" said Mignon; "is it you that thought of and made all that! And who taught you? how did you do it?"

Graziella arose, and pointed to her forehead with a sort of pride, then placed her hand on her heart with a sad expression; then, rummaging again at the bottom of her dear basket, she pulled out, like a treasure, a little lump of brown, wet clay, which she held carefully on her breast, soiling herself more than ever.

Yes, it was indeed the secret desire, the passionate task for art which occupied this young intelligence that was supposed extinct; it was the necessity of imitating the work of her father, that had captivated and absorbed all her instincts; it was a hidden homage offered to the deserted hearthstone.

A sort of bashfulness of feeling had prevented her recalling before her companions her dearest *souvenirs*, for fear of their mockery.

Her natural temerity caused her to hide from every one her essays, which she still considered too clumsy.

When she was seen at the foot of the trees, plastering the wet earth alone, no one dreamed of the efforts she made to perfect her first attempts. The heavy rains had left, in a shady alley, a soft, sticky mud, most favorable to her designs, and she had scraped it up like the most precious of treasures. Such was the cause of the strange disorder of her toilet.

Nothing less was wanting than the confidence inspired by the tender look and caressing voice of Mignon; nothing less was wanting than the desire to see herself justified before her gentle protectress, and to obtain her forgiveness, in order to decide her to make this avowal. Mignon was too happy. She embraced Graziella with tenderness, without thinking of her muddy hands and tatooed face.

"Dear child," said she, with emotion, "you loved your father then very much? And I also have lost all--all. We are both alone and forsaken, and should love each other all the more. It was to think always of him, was it not, dear child, that with your inexperienced

hand, you tried to imitate what you saw him do? What a good inspiration! You must take courage—I will assist you. Why did you not tell me sooner, simple child!"

And she embraced her again; then she examined with more attention the little figures before her, and was astonished at seeing what the will and heart could accomplish without any other resources whatever. The little mute, whom her secret suffocated, was delighted with the encouragement she received from her dear *confidante*, and expressed her gratitude by a thousand caresses.

Mignon knew the history of Graziella. She often thought of the future of this child, whom misfortune had attached to her own destiny, and she had not the heart to abandon her. It seemed as though Providence had confided her to her; after what she had seen, she could not doubt her great facility and real talent, and she perceived with joy the means of procuring her useful employment, by which she could be occupied, notwithstanding her infirmity.

Mignon, who drew with taste, now gave her every day lessons in drawing, provided her with means to model, potter's earth, chisels

of every sort, and little models in *terra cotta* to copy from ; she obtained from the good Superior, who entered willingly into all her designs, permission for Graziella to have her little studio in a deserted shed which overlooked the court.

From this day forth, Graziella was another being; she no longer was depressed and melancholy ; she no longer had dirty hands ; she handled her chisels with dexterity, to give every shape to this precious brown earth with which they provided her. She had a pleasing little countenance—happiness giving her a prettier expression— and her gratitude for her little mother bordered on adoration.

Although she had no other master than nature and her own ardent will, she made, for so tender an age, astonishing progress, and on the day of the Feast of the Assumption, which is a great day at the Convent of the Augustinians, she gave a touching proof of her intelligence and *savoir faire.*

It was the custom on that day to erect a beautiful tabernacle in the reserved orchard at the end of the plantain court. On leaving the chapel, all the scholars, in veils and white dresses, went in procession to the orchard,

singing canticles, and carrying fresh bouquets of flowers, which they piled in a rich pyramid at the feet of a statue of the Virgin.

They had well stripped the forest bushes, to spread a thick green carpet up to the tabernacle; they had dressed the statue in a splendid brocade robe, which fell in stiff, straight folds, as is seen in the churches of Angers. They had adorned her brow with a sparkling diadem; but the head of the Virgin Mary, it must be confessed, had suffered much from the inclemency of the seasons, and was no longer worthy of this adornment. Judge, then, of the surprise and astonishment when, on the morning of the Assumption, beneath the crown of the Virgin Mary, was seen an angelic countenance, which seemed to look down with a sweet smile upon those gathered around.

All were amazed; the old portress began to cry out something about a "miracle," a "miracle," and such it was—a miracle of friendship and gratitude. Graziella, aided by a few companions and a nun who was in the secret, had replaced the damaged head-piece by a charming face, which recalled the noble and soft features of Mignon. It was the

purest type that her heart could suggest to her as a fit representation of the holiest of Virgins. The work was doubtless not irreproachable, yet the expression was excellent. It gave reason to hope that Graziella, by her efforts, would one day become a really good artist.

After this lovely feast of the Virgin, the studies are relaxed, if not suspended. The vacations draw near. Now is the time for the long promenades in the most sequestered parts of the fair old forest. With what enthusiastic ardor childhood and youth plunge into the woods, and lose themselves in the shades of the tall trees! Do you remember that? Does it not seem as if those young girls were taking possession of their empire? Heaven and earth are theirs; theirs is the breeze that passes by; theirs are the tall grass, the bushes and the flowers! The soft moss tempts them; the birds call them; where shall they run first? What discoveries; what cries of joy; how many paths chosen, abandoned and recovered! how many butterflies pursued and outstripped! What beautiful golden insects nestle in the eglantines! Do not wake them, children, they are sleeping!

How beautiful the tall woods are when they are animated by the young explorers! How beautiful the young girls are when they ramble through the tall woods!

There is the group of botanists—each one is provided with her satchel; a skillful nun teaches how to recognize the herbs; from the oak to the hyssop, each tree, each plant has its virtues. The treasures of the forest are more abundant and more precious than those hidden in the bowels of the earth, for plants give life, while the thirst for gold often destroys. He who knew every property of the plants; who knew all that can be drawn from flowers, stems, fruits and roots, would be richer than a king, and almost as wise as God himself. How many mysteries are still hidden from us! There is, then, no recreation more attractive, more salutary, more fruitful in unexpected discoveries, than the study of botany. While some, with all the zeal of their age, busy themselves with seeking and classifying the herbs, carefully selecting the chosen specimens of each plant, others indulge in their games.

In one of the most beautiful parts of the forest, called the "Retreat," there are broad

and splendid alleys, carpeted with moss and a grass as fine and soft as the hair of a child; immense and venerable trees cast over this vast space a dim twilight, and impart a freshness to the atmosphere. It was a real theatre of flowers; thick bushes formed natural scenery; the back ground was vaporous and full of mystery; the gentle declivity of the ground forms a velvet carpeted amphitheatre for the spectators. Do you not hear the orchestre of linnets and nightingales?

What a pleasing sight, to see the grave Superior seated in the midst of the nuns, with the attentive pupils grouped below them, while some of them, more intelligent or skillful than the rest, represent in this vast theatre either a scene from the Old Testament, such as the history of Ruth and Naomi, or Rebecca and Eleazar, or else an historical *souvenir*, such as the inspiration of Jeanne d' Arc, or the devotion of St. Geneviève!

The good Superior, with her just and impartial mind, liked to see, in the retreat of the convent, or the depths of the forest, these young minds representing, without any preparation of costume or scenery, these different dramas. It seemed to her that these innocent

essays taught them how to express their thoughts with clearness, and to condense them in few words; she liked to see them reproduce the simple *pastorales*, like those that Paul and Virginia attempted, beneath the banana-trees, before Madame de la Tour Marguerite.

Mignon excelled in these improvisations, because she was intelligent, but above all, because she was simple and natural. Timidity comes generally from vanity, and from the inordinate desire to produce a great effect: but the charming Mignon, when charged with acting a certain part, simply put herself in the place of the personage—spoke and acted as she would have spoken and acted in similar circumstances; she became this person, and was moved by the sentiments which she would have felt.

She produced a wonderful impression by her words and gestures, so full of truth; her secret was simply that she was touched herself.

We remember having seen her represent an interesting scene, in which she revealed all her talent and grace. The theatre was most favorable to the piece, and the accessories were

not wanting. It was called "The Miracle of Roses."

To execute this simple scene, which always amused the children, it was first necessary to put the entire joyous band *en campagne*. It was the great harvest of eglantines. But the bushes are so generous! The little forest roses at each step show their smiling faces; and how many of these beautiful white, rosy or scarlet stars are never seen—never looked upon! They are veiled beneath the shady branch, as brilliant and as perfectly executed by the divine hand, as if each of them were to be examined and admired as a masterpiece, and yet, no one has seen them; but God has sown them without counting, as He has sown the daisies in the meadows, the corn flowers in the corn, the good instincts in the heart, and the stars in the sky.

On that day, no mercy for the eglantines. Oh, what a splendid harvest! Gather, gather, young girls! Carry in your arms the branches of white stars; there still remains more of them, and will ever remain, as will the smiles and kisses of your mothers; there will always be more left behind, for God gives without stint. Gather, gather, young sprites!

But the harvest is over; the piece is about to commence; the spectators are waiting; the actresses are behind the green scenery; three blows are struck with the hand, and all is ready.

May we be pardoned a short analysis, which we will abridge as much as possible to arrive at the *dénouêment*, allowing each person to improvise her part without pretention, and according to her own fashion, except altering somewhat the pure text of the golden legend, from which is borrowed this *naive* and graceful scene?

Saint Elizabeth is first seen, followed by her women, distributing clothes and food to the poor and sick, addressing them at the same time with consoling words. Elizabeth is no other than the gentle Mignon. Her beautiful brow is adorned with a crown of roses; the train of her mantle is borne by her page, Graziella. The poor and sick withdraw, blessing her.

At the same instant, her august husband appears, represented by a large girl with majestic step; his hat is ornamented with a branch of cypress, and a wand of hazel wood is his powerful sword. The landgrave speaks

loudly, and reproaches Elizabeth for her prodigality; he complains at seeing his wealth disappearing, and orders that, for the future, no distribution of alms shall take place without his permission. Elizabeth pleads with warmth and in a supplicating voice, the cause of the unfortunate. Her husband is inflexible, and retires, repeating his orders. Elizabeth, alone, deplores the cruel severity of the landgrave, and addresses a prayer to God that he may be recalled to better sentiments.

Meanwhile, one of the women informs her that a band of poor people, who have lost everything by the burning of their village, and dying with hunger, are wandering before the castle door, begging their bread.

"My Lord!" says Elizabeth, "it is you who send them to me for succor. You do not wish me to leave them to perish, without aid, at the door of a castle wherein abundance reigns. You will pardon me for disobeying my husband again. I am ready to prove him my submission in every other circumstance, and I will deprive myself of all to compensate for this liberality."

She then orders her page to bring a large quantity of bread, and to collect cleverly to-

gether all he can find in the castle. Her orders are executed, and this bread, which is the scholars' supper, is brought to the feet of Elizabeth.

She ostensibly fills her mantle with it, and orders her women to hide some under their garments; then, addressing another prayer to heaven, and passing behind a bush that is on the theatre, she looks around with precaution to see whether she is not observed, and prepares to retire, ordering her women to follow her, in order to bring prompt aid to the sufferers without.

It is then that the terrible landgrave reappears.

"Stop!" cries he, "rebellious wife! You are preparing again, I know it, to transgress and despise my orders. Charity serves you as a pretext to forego the first of your duties; but if you have ventured to disobey me again, fear my wrath."

General terror. The women remain silent and motionless.

"What have you there under your mantle?" says the landgrave, in a severe voice, to one of the attendants, who appears more heavily laden than the rest.

"My lord," says the maiden, hesitatingly, after having exchanged a look with Elizabeth, "it is roses, which we have gathered to make perfume with."

"Let us see these fine roses," says the landgrave, ironically, roughly shaking the cloak of the servant.

And the blooming eglantines fall in showers at her feet. Elizabeth and all her women appear very much astonished, tremblingly unfold their mantles, and a shower of flowers cover the stage like an abundant fall of snow.

The landgrave retires in great confusion, and Saint Elizabeth, who thought herself lost, throws herself on her knees, with her followers, to thank heaven for the protection it has accorded them through the *Miracle of Roses*.

Well! the result was certainly provided for. The children had lent their bread, and had gathered the eglantines; they could not doubt the substitution which took place in passing behind the back, and yet, the effect on this young audience was immense when the beautiful and radiant countenance of Mignon appeared thanking God, up to her knees in a cloud of snow-white roses; the children all applauded, and were happy at thus seeing the

generous Elizabeth escape from the fury of the terrible landgrave; then each one took back her bread for her supper.

But on that day, Mignon found in her heart another inspiration, and having asked permission of the Superior in an undertone, she announced to all that she was about to work another miracle.

She had observed behind the trees a miserable, homeless family, who watched their plays with great sadness; she, therefore, reappeared, carrying in her skirt a heavy burden, from which fell a great quantity of roses, and beckoned to the poor woman, who was standing near the alley, to come towards her.

She was a young woman from Alsace, and appeared very much fatigued; she carried a small baby, another following her, with difficulty clinging to her dress; two little girls walked in front. How much these poor creatures had already suffered!

"My dear child, would you like some forest roses?" said Mignon, in her gentle voice, embracing the eldest child with compassion.

"Oh! forest roses, ma'am," said, sadly, the child, with her hair as blond as the ripened wheat; "there are enough of them along the

roadside; it is bread we want. Our father is ill, we have a long way to go to get to him, and we are very hungry!"

"Well! child," said Mignon, "why doubt Providence? Breathe only on these roses."

The child, looking at Mignon with the confidence which her charming countenance always inspired, but appearing still to hesitate, breathed, smilingly, on the mantle.

Then Mignon unfolded her skirt, and twelve pieces of bread fell at her feet, mingled with roses, and accompanied by a purse containing some pieces of money, which were to help this unhappy family to continue their voyage.

This new miracle was more applauded than the first. The poor woman thanked the good angel who gave her her days' bread; she saluted the nuns and children, by showing them her little infant, who smiled; and Mignon found thus occasion to show the treasures of her heart, even in her games.

XI.

THE PARDON.

Maurice de Terrenoire, too conscientious to allow his feelings to cause him to neglect his duty, worked away with redoubled ardor. He forwarded to the minister the result of his studies in Tuscany and Lombardy, and received testimonials of satisfaction which would have flattered his vanity, if such a sentiment could have found room in a heart occupied by totally different feelings.

He saw in the advancement of his position but another feeble hope of uniting his future with her who occupied his every thought. He foresaw the happy day when, his labors finished, he could return to France, and devote himself entirely to the two beings his mission it was to protect.

Meanwhile, he only lived on the news from home. Mr. Renard's letters had to be written more and more minutely. The excellent and officious lawyer amused himself more and more with this little romance, which he hoped

to bring to a good issue. As he had his country house at Fourqueny, very near St. Germain, he was able to hear and prove everything by frequent visits, and he did not spare the details in his correspondence; it was for him a charming distraction after the dull, prosy routine of his duties as notary. In his letters, Theresa was only spoken of by the name of Mignon; he had adopted, like every one else, the new name of the orphan. This pretty name, so soft to pronounce, made the grave Maurice sometimes smile; this name presented itself under his pen during his stern and solitary occupations, and, perhaps, in his slumber it dwelt upon his lips. The lovely countenance of Mignon was his ideal. It is an uncertain goal like this that gives so much courage.

There was particularly one circumstance which appeared so Providential to him, and which complied so perfectly with his dearest wishes, that he was touched and charmed with it. He knew by the letters of Mr. Renard, (real journal of the convent), that Mignon had become the mother of Graziella, and that under the happy influence of so tender a friendship, the talent of the little mute for sculpture had been developed.

What beautiful dreams passed before his eyes, sometimes, during his long hours of solitude! How he congratulated himself on having saved intact the studio of Marx! He fancied he saw the gentle Mignon leading again some day the poor child into the studio of her father, and securing to her an existence doubly sure, for, perhaps, he would be there himself. His imagination lost itself in these seductive visions of an unknown future.

He could no longer keep silent; he wished to prepare Mignon for his return, but he feared either to say too much or too little. He tore up several letters in which his feelings were too apparent. To speak of Mignon, could he do so? To speak of himself, would that interest Mignon? Graziella appeared to furnish him with an excellent pretext for his correspondence, and Mignon received one day, in the presence of the Superior, and through the intervention of Mr. Renard, a letter dated Florence.

The sight of this letter was for her the most important event of her convent life. The Superior saw her blush; then she became as white as a sheet of paper, and was obliged to sit down. She was not mistress of this first impression, but soon took courage.

"What is there more simple?" said she, trying to reason with herself; "this is the friend to whom my father recommended me, who writes me, after a lapse of a year, to ask me how I am, and, perhaps, to talk on business. There can be no other transaction between us; his silence has proven to me his indifference, and, besides, everything separates us. Why, then, should I be more affected by this letter than by any other?"

And recovering her firmness, she opened the letter, and read the following:

"My Dear Cousin, Theresa:—You must not attribute the silence which I have maintained either to indifference or forgetfulness. If a feeling of respect imposed this reserve upon me, believe, at least, I beg of you, that your good father, in recommending you to my care, put his confidence in a sincere heart. I have mourned with you for him we have lost. I have promised myself to consecrate my life in replacing him; and, detained here by duty, I have not ceased, (I hope your friendship will permit it), I have not ceased occupying myself with you.

"A devoted friend has informed me of all

you suffered in the paternal house, and from afar I watched over you. It was to deliver you from this martyrdom that I, by covert means, induced your stepmother to decide on sending you to a convent, where I hoped you would be happy. Will you pardon my having thus disposed of you?

"With what happiness did I learn that you were cherished in this retreat! Nothing that concerns you is unknown to me. Mignon, let me give you this sweet name which those give you who love you most; this name will cause you to forget the times in which you suffered so much. Permit me to become your adviser —your brother—your protector. Will you give me your confidence, Mignon? We shall, perhaps, find less bitter days in our past memories—and have we not another tie besides our recollections? Our hearts are united, without your knowing it, in consoling a great affliction. Yes, it was the purest of joys which I felt, far from you, when I learned that your tenderness had been directed towards the abandoned little being near you, as if from an instinct of our mutual friendship. The father of Graziella was my most intimate friend—he perished before gathering the fruit

of his talent and labor. When I heard of the misfortune of this family, I wished at least to secure and protect this poor child, and it is by my care that she is brought up at the Convent of the Augustinians.

"Imagine my joy, Mignon, when I heard that your gentle friendship had triumphed over her indifference and apparent apathy; and that under your care, her vocation of artist had been revealed and developed. You are at present my associate in this good work, to which you have contributed more than myself. Will we not have the happiness of watching over our little mute together? I reserve for her, in my turn, a surprise which will please you I am sure.

"What a good inspiration prompted me to unite in the same refuge the two beings I most dearly love to protect! I could not inspire your friendship for Graziella, but do you not find, Mignon, something Providential in this affection which attaches this little creature to us both?

"I am sure at present of addressing myself to your heart; I only speak to you of the dear child that you have adopted. I am certain that this will touch you. Take good care of

her for me. I hope to be soon on my way home, and then will tell you all my plans. You will rejoice with me at the good we can yet do together.

"How kind you would be if you would reply to me by a few lines! if it is only to tell me that you still remember our friendship, and that our little *protégée* will belong to us both.

"Believe in the unalterable attachment of your devoted friend,

MAURICE DE TERRENOIRE."

Mignon re-read this two or three times over before fully understanding it. It seemed to her as though she had omitted something in reading so fast. She convinced herself that Maurice, in this long letter, had not said a word of his marriage. She was surprised at this silence on so important a step in his life. It was for her a grave subject of meditation; then she tried to chase away the idea as well as all the others which crowded on her mind. She only wished to see in this letter that which was there written, viz: the assurance of a sincere attachment, and the proof of a generous heart. She felt a great joy in learn-

ing that Graziella was like an adoptive child to Maurice ; she admired the fortunate chance that had drawn this unhappy creature to her heart. Graziella became dearer to her than ever, and the child did not understand why she was embraced with more than ordinary tenderness.

She was touched at finding that Maurice was informed almost day by day of all her occupations. She loved to feel herself under his influence, and nearly in his power. But she could not comprehend how Maurice had been able to influence her stepmother, from afar, in the choice of a convent ; for she well knew, at the bottom of her heart, what had decided *her* to seek a refuge here.

Then her thought fixed upon the printed letter which had been placed before her eyes, of which she had not forgotten a line ; she almost doubted sometimes what she had seen, and fancied herself a prey to some hallucination. But she did not wish to indulge in these uncertainties, and changed the tenor of her thoughts by force of will, and only dreamed of the views of Maurice concerning Graziella ; of the surprise he had in store for her, and in which she, Mignon, was destined to take part.

It was for her also an aim in life. She waited for the return of Maurice with impatience. She well felt she could not avoid replying to him, and, notwithstanding all the simplicity of her nature, it was not without some embarrassment that she wrote the following lines:

"Your silence was painful for me, but I could not blame you; I well knew that from friendship for my father you would not forget Mignon. But I supposed that you were occupied with other cares, and I regretted not knowing anything of what concerned you, for you told me nothing, Maurice, either of yourself or your habits.

"I love Graziella more than ever now that I know she interests you; she has made great progress, and I shall be most happy to associate myself in any surprise that you have in store for this dear child. I am so well off in this house that you have chosen for me, that I hope to remain here always, but in order to obey the last wishes of my father, I am ready to consult you in all things.

"Yes, I wish you to call me Mignon, for with this name I commenced a new life. I

have reflected well, and it seems me to that I should like to pass my existence in this convent, near Madame Theresa, our worthy Superior, who is a mother to me. I could assist her in bringing up the children, and, perhaps, could succeed in rendering myself useful. Since I have been separated from my sisters, nothing recalls me to a world where, as you know, I was not happy; but you must give me your permission in this particular, for I like to count on you as an adviser, and brother, and a guide.

"Believe in my sincere friendship.

"P. S.—The name of Maurice was the last word my good father addressed me."

Maurice, on receiving this letter, imitated Mignon: read it over repeatedly to find out its full meaning. Conflicting feelings were awakened within him on perusing it. He liked this mild reproach: "I regretted not knowing any thing of what concerned you, for you told me nothing either of yourself or your habits."

He perceived with joy that the friendship of Mignon for Graziella had become warmer since he had written her that this child was

dear to him. He was touched with the confidence that Mignon showed him in promising to consult him in everything; but why did Mignon talk of secluding herself for life in a convent where he had only intended she should find a temporary refuge? Had she then wrongly interpreted his intentions? Did she suppose he had wished to give her a taste for a religious life, in placing her with the Augustinians?

That was the cause of his uneasiness. Therefore, promptly finishing his business in Tuscany and Lombardy, he hastened towards France. However, the postscript, which they say contains the most intimate thought of a letter, either hidden or expressed, always was uppermost in his thoughts: "The name of Maurice was the last word my good father addressed me!"

Let us leave Maurice, busied in his reflections, to continue his journey, and let us see what has become of the Crevecœur establishment under the management of the widow.

Has Madame Crevecœur at last found repose in removing, far from her, her inoffensive stepdaughter, whose sight recalled too vividly to her mind all that she wished to forget?

No; this agitation sprang from the character itself of this haughty woman, and it was not the absence of a child that could calm it. To forget herself, she plunged into a vortex of luxury and extravagance. She heeded less than ever the advice of the prudent Mr. Renard; she thought to make many friends in attracting a crowd of parasites; she thought she would belong to the *grand monde* in seeing a great deal of society; she tried to cause people to forget she sold stuffs, by wearing finer and richer toilettes than any of the women who came to amuse themselves with her prodigality. As for business, she left that to the clerks, with whom the only intercourse she had, was to call unceasingly for more money.

Pressed for want of funds, she tried to borrow, but could not give sufficient security. She then wished to sell her house and country seat, but was told she could not dispose of this property. This resistance to her will enraged her. Business people, ordinarily rather patient in their transactions, in order to keep up their patronage, at last could no longer put up with her exactions. The imperturbable Mr. Renard was the only one left to listen to

her imprecations, and to offer her hollow consolation.

The vigorous health of Madame Crevecœur gave way under such exciting scenes. Her face became purple; her heated blood rushed to her head, and nearly suffocated her. The doctor that was sent for, ordered immediately a powerful remedy; she resisted all his prescriptions.

He retired, making a low bow, and was replaced by another, who was no more successful. She called for her servants without any motive, and dismissed them with impatience. The chambermaids were on nettles; no nurse could stay near her.

What had become of all the attentive friends that had filled her splendid saloons? Where were her companions of pleasure? Even her own family deserted her. The honest Mr. Morin could not forgive her her ingratitude to so good a man, or the neglect that she showed her stepdaughter. In what a state was this house, formerly so prosperous? What disorder; what quarreling among the servants; what pilfering; what absence of care for the children! Who will take cnarge of this house? Who will give the or

ders? Who will regulate the expenses? She did not even dare have recourse to her family.

One day, when the invalid was more excited than ever, the doctor considered it his duty to give her to understand, with all the necessary precaution, that it was, perhaps, time to regulate her conscience; he assured her she was in no danger, but that the consolation of religion would, perhaps, give some calm to her mind.

"A priest!" cried she, beside herself, sitting up in bed; "a priest for me! But I will not die! You must save me; it is very easy to put me off on a priest. Are you not paid to cure me—you, a doctor? Don't bring any priest! I'm afraid of them! I'm afraid!"

She was really hideous thus, and fell back insensible in the bed. Yes, this woman might well be afraid when she thought of all the ruin, and all the suffering her selfishness had accumulated around her. She did not want to tell a minister of the Lord the state of her soul; but sickness began to subdue her, and in the silence of the night she found herself in the presence of a witness before whom she had to confess all: the spectre of Conscience. In

the forsaken condition in which she found herself, she made the sad review of her past life.

She saw herself a happy young maiden in her father's house; then gaining by her artifices the heart of an honest man; then loading him with cares and misfortunes by her selfishness and avidity; then driving from her house the stepdaughter she had promised to protect, and, finally, neglecting her own children, and conducting her whole household to ruin.

"My God!" said she, (for she also invoked God, this woman who would not look at the sombre costume of a minister of religion), "every one forsakes me! Who will save me —who will take an interest in me? Who will look after my children? Who will have pity on me?"

And a voice replied from the bottom of her heart, which was not entirely turned to stone, a voice replied:

"Yes, you know it well, there is still in the world a poor creature to whom you have done much evil; whom you have covered with indignities; whom you have separated from all that was dear to her; whom you have driven

off, and whose heart you wounded when it touched for the last time the threshold of your house; and you have only a word to say, you know it well, and that angel will be again at your bedside as humble, as gentle, and as devoted as ever."

The name of this angel was Mignon, for Madame Crevecœur knew her well, and in the depths of her conscience she had to do justice to her victim. She felt she could not live in this way, and having begged her notary, Mr. Renard, to call and see her as soon as possible, she made a grand effort to say to him:

"I feel myself conquered by disease; you have all forsaken me, and I only know of one being in the world who will still have compassion on me. You know very well who it is, my stepdaughter. If I had any pride left, I would not expose myself to this humiliation; but hasten, I beg of you, and tell her I am dying—abandoned— and that my children, her sisters, ask for her presence. She will come, I know it, the poor child will come to succor her who has driven her away. I want no one but her near me."

Mr. Renard looked at her in silence.

"Is it then necessary," said he to himself, "that misfortune should strike, in order that the eyes may be opened, and light be given!"

He almost pitied this arrogant woman, who now implored her whom she had trampled upon.

"But," said he, "you send me on a very delicate errand; will you at least assure me that you will treat her with gentleness and consideration; that no harsh word will issue from your lips, and that her little sisters will be placed under her care? You must promise me all that before I can go and disturb the quiet of this poor child, who suffered so much."

"Go quickly," said she, "I promise everything; but I must see her—time flies. I have, besides, an avowal to make which will interest her much."

On returning to his house, Mr. Renard found a line from Maurice de Terrenoire, who informed him that he had just arrived, and was waiting for him at his hotel. After the first effusions of friendship, their conversation turned upon Mignon.

"I was just setting out for Saint Germain," said the lawyer, "will you replace me? I

had a rather delicate proposition to make to Mignon, about which she will, perhaps, desire to consult you, for the affair is serious."

He then explained to his friend the deplorable state into which Madame Crevecœur had fallen; and after having deliberated with Mr. Renard, Maurice set out alone for the Convent of the Augustinians.

How his heart beat when he entered the parlor! But his intentions were so upright and generous that he was able to tell everything without fear or embarrassment to Madame Theresa, the Superior, who already knew him through the accounts of Mr. Renard. She had so much affection for Mignon, that she already liked him who wished to be her support in life, and replace her father.

"Madame," said he, respectfully, "you are already aware of my entire attachment for your amiable pupil—your dear Mignon. Her father, foreseeing his approaching end, and about to leave her without protection in the world, placed his confidence in me, and I have carefully preserved this letter, which I beg of you to read, for it explains my presence here—it gives me some right to occupy myself with Mignon's future, and to consult you,

madame—you who received her with a goodness so maternal."

"Mr. Maurice," said the Superior, "I know your admirable conduct. I know that it is to your generosity that Graziella owes the fortunate position she occupies here near Mignon. Who would not listen to you with interest? There is no necessity for my reading this letter, to know your merit; however, since you desire it, I will read it."

The letter contained only these words:

"My Dear Maurice:—I know you, although so young, have all the wisdom and experience of riper age. You have a noble heart, my friend, and it is to you, to your heart, that, feeling my end near, I wish to bequeath my dearest treasure—my beloved Theresa. Yours is the care of her future. If you have a liking for her—if she should ever love you as I have sometimes hoped—take her for your wife; you have both my consent and my dearest wishes. From the resting place which awaits me, I would like to see united the two beings that have best repaid my tenderness. It seems to me that I shall live again in your midst.

"But I know your delicacy; you will not make use of my desire as a means of crossing her will, if indifference or any other sentiment should influence her against you; and, if you should not become her husband, you will at least be her father, her counsellor and her guide. You are responsible to me before God for her future. With this letter I remit the titles which ensure her fortune, not being able to place them in better hands. As for me, I feel it, I have but to die.

"Adieu, Maurice; may you be happy.

"AIME CREVECŒUR."

"Yes," said the Superior, looking with respect at this letter that contained the last wishes of a dying man; "yes, you are indeed her father—you are everything to her. She is a sweet and charming creature; what do you intend to do?"

"But, madame, can I detain you with the recital of my projects? Does the austerity of your life permit you to take an interest in my concerns?"

"Speak on, speak on," said the Superior; "should I not follow my dear children to their entrance into the world? I do not forget

them when they have gone, and they do not forget me either; for those who are married come often with their children to see me."

"Well, madame, as you are so encouraging, and as you realize so well the opinion I had formed of your noble character, it is you that I wish to ask whether Mignon really has a decided vocation for a convent life."

"I think not," said Madame Theresa; "this is the first I have heard of it; she has, I know, a gentle piety, but I have observed in her neither exaltation nor asceticism. Besides, we never encourage such inclinations; a vocation must be very decided to inspire us with confidence. Young minds may easily be deceived as to their own feelings, and this would be a great misfortune. Our duty is to enlighten them, and moderate their zeal. But why do we not call her? You should see her by all means."

She, therefore, sent for Mignon. And which was the most touched of these two beings, who, perhaps, both felt the same sentiment, but who, for very different reasons, wished to hide them in the lowest depth of their hearts?

"Dear Mignon," said the Superior, "here is the protector—the devoted friend your fa-

ther left you; he will be a second parent to you."

Mignon, trembling violently, offered her hand to Maurice.

"I know what I owe him," said she, "and will do nothing without his consent. My father gave me this direction in his last moments."

"Mademoiselle," said Maurice, keeping her hand in his, "or, rather, dear Mignon, if you will allow me also to call you by this title of friendship, I have deeply regretted being detained so long away from France, and not being able to take more care of you; I know, however, that I have been well replaced by the gentle mother you have found here; but you cannot stay here always, and I wish to consult you"———

"Maurice," said Mignon, interrupting him, and eagerly taking the hand of the Superior, "you could find for me no better refuge; I have thanked you for it often from the bottom of my heart. I have nothing to do in the world, as I have already told you. All that I have ever seen of it has given me pain—here I find peace. Oh! madame, keep me with you; I will try to make myself useful here."

"My child," said the Superior, "so important a resolution cannot be so quickly made. You are formed for the world. You must have the courage to appear in it. We will talk of that later."

"Yes, it is here that I would like to live," said Mignon, "if you will permit me, Maurice; you whom my father directed me to obey as I would himself."

"Well," said Maurice, "all I ask of you, Mignon, is not to be so hasty. Besides, you will be at liberty to do as you think best. I will not say anything to-day about Graziella; I know all you have done for her. How could I thank you? Your recompense is in your own heart.

"But it is just to your heart that I wish now to address myself. I am charged with a painful errand. I know all that your stepmother has made you suffer. Well, she is now overwhelmed with misfortune and sickness; abandoned by her friends, she has no confidence in those around her; but she knows you well, and implores your assistance. I hardly dare to tell you, Mignon, that it is you she desires to see at her bedside; it is from you alone that she wishes to receive attention.

She is waiting for you. Have you enough courage for this?"

"Oh! yes," said Mignon, without hesitating, "yes, I will have the courage; not a bitter word will issue from my lips. Let me go; I ask it of you both, who have control over me; you, my mother of adoption, and you, Maurice, who are here as my father. Yes, my dear father would approve of it—I feel that he would; let me fulfill this duty. Happy those who can render good for evil! I shall then see my poor little sisters again! It is, perhaps, God who sends me back to this house."

And she held out her hand to Maurice.

How lovely Mignon was, with this fire of charity lighting up her eye! How beautiful she was! but it was the beauty of the soul, which transfigures and outshines all other charms; one saw only an angel of goodness. Maurice was, as it were, dazzled with this light; he remained in speechless ecstasy.

"Hearken to the good instincts of your heart, dear, very dear child," said the Superior, after a pause, "and if Mr. Maurice consents, I myself will accompany you."

"What a heart!" said Maurice, in a low

voice, holding Mignon's hand in his. "Thank you, Mignon! I had rightly judged you; you will again be the good angel of your father's house; but above all, take care of yourself, and do not undertake more than your strength will permit."

He left her, after asking permission to visit her at her stepmother's house.

The Superior and Mignon were conducted, towards evening, into the chamber of the sick woman. They entered softly; a night-lamp threw a dim and flickering light on the confusion around. How Mignon's heart sank within her!

Madame Crevecœur was dozing, and the two visitors seated themselves silently at the bedside. When she opened her eyes, she was struck with the black dress of the nun. Her weak brain fancied it was a spectre.

"Mercy—pity!" cried she; "I am punished enough."

"Madame," said the Superior, "here is Mignon—here is your stepdaughter whom you sent for, and who comes willingly, as a dutiful child, to surround you with every care."

Madame Crevecœur appeared to revive somewhat, and clasping her hands:

"Theresa," said she, "you are an angel! Oh, don't be afraid of me; come nearer—come! I am saved if you do not leave me; heaven will not strike me if you hold my hand. I knew you would come; but," she added with difficulty, "you can love me no longer, I know that, too; you do not even want to be called Theresa; you call yourself Mignon, doubtless to forget your past life. But I, Mignon, am no longer your stepmother. I do not command now. I am only a poor sick woman, who has no more hope except in you. My strength is leaving me. While I still have the force to speak, and in the presence of madame, I have a prayer to offer you; the dying should be heard."

"Speak, my mother," said Mignon. "I came to bring you assistance, and not to give you pain."

"Well," said the invalid, with an effort, "promise me that you will forgive me, and that you will love my children."

"They are my sisters," said Mignon; "I shall love them always; as for the rest, all is forgotten."

The Superior retired, after having embraced her dear pupil, and giving her countless in

junctions, and Mignon, commencing her functions of *garde malade*, watched with solicitude. The house soon assumed a different aspect. Calmness begets calmness; she commanded with gentleness, and the servants, captivated by this will, which resembled a prayer, obeyed with alacrity.

Mignon joyfully embraced her little sisters, from whom she had so long been separated. They had entirely forgotten her teachings, and had somewhat relapsed into their savage state; but her maternal care soon produced a change for the better. However, to relieve herself still more, she consulted with Mr. Renard and the Superior, who often came to see her, and as Madame Crevecœur was no longer in a condition to be consulted, it was agreed that the two eldest should be placed at the convent, while she kept the two little ones under her supervision.

Madame Crevecœur grew daily weaker. This fiery nature was subdued by suffering. She obeyed like a child. When she had some what recovered, Mignon read aloud to her some of the most beautiful pages of the *Imitation of Christ.*

"That is very beautiful," said the invalid,

as if astonished at the grandeur of these ideas. "Very beautiful! Read it again, Mignon, your voice does me good. Then there is a God who pardons the repentant? My child, I have been thinking these last few days can I ever reconcile myself with God. I need a priest to hear me; but before all, Mignon, I do not know whether I shall have strength enough left; I have something to tell you."

"Tell it, mother," said Mignon, "you know I have forgotten all the past."

"Have you forgotten a letter?—but no—I cannot go on"———

"Speak—speak quickly, mother," said Mignon; "it will do you good."

"Have you forgotten," continued Madame Crevecœur, with an effort; "have you forgotten having seen once a printed letter announcing a marriage? Well, I have learned since —I have heard it was a false report. But you, Mignon, do you know it? Do you know that Maurice de Terrenoire is not married? You are surely too proud to ask about it. Do you also know"———

Here she stopped, exhausted by this avowal that had cost her such an effort; but Mignon could not have heard more; she was herself

entirely shaken by an announcement which could make such a change in her resolutions; and she, perhaps, felt more joy through these few words than she had endured suffering since her father's death.

"Do you also know that he loves you?" resumed Madame Crevecœur, in a fainter voice, after a long pause; "yes, I have known that he loves you for a very long time; your large fortune is the cause of his silence. I know all that, Mignon. And how many times I have wished to tell you of it since you have been watching me like a devoted daughter! I am much changed, and already feel myself comforted by this avowal. I would like to see you happy. See here, this portrait, how many times I have held it in my hand to give it up to you--for it is really yours! I do not know what false shame prevented me! But I must soon appear before Him who sees all our actions. If you forgive me, so will He also. You don't say anything, Mignon. If you only would give me a good word."

But Mignon could say nothing! She admired in silence how her sweetest consolation came from her who had made her suffer most, and she thought of these words she had read

in the Bible that morning: "The honey has been found in the jaws of the lion."

"I promise you," said Mignon, finally, taking the portrait of Maurice, "I promise you, mother, that your children shall be our own."

"Dear angel, you have divined my wishes," said the exhausted sick woman. "It is what I expected from two hearts like yours; yes, I can die now!"

"No," said Mignon, "you will live to love these dear children with us; but now, you must repose yourself."

And she arranged everything for the night, which was setting in. Her service was gentle and noiseless. She spoke gently, walked softly, and only made her presence felt when it was wanted.

Madame Crevecœur was exhausted by the fatigue of this scene; but at the same time her conscience was relieved by the confession of the truth, which had to be told sooner or later. The night was a little calmer; and assiduous care restored her slowly. We have seen Selfishness, which kills; behold Love, which saves!

Mignon, notwithstanding her prolonged watchings, kept a serene countenance. She

sometimes wrote to her dear Graziella, and lived on the past and the future. She had also, perhaps, at the bottom of her heart a secret joy which more than compensated for all her trials.

XII.

THE BENGAL FIRE.

How beautiful is the calmness which succeeds the tumultuous thunder of the storm, when the gigantic bow of seven colors spans the firmament! It is a solemn moment. Nature then seems to recollect herself; she has not yet dried her tears; all around is hushed; nought is heard but the heavy drops which drip from the branches surcharged with rain, like the pearls of a jeweled casket; like the tears that trickle on the cheek of an already consoled child. Then, at the first smile of nature, all these liquid pearls mount up to heaven in a light vapor, as a pure incense.

How beautiful is the silence which follows great suffering, when appears the radiant prism

of hope. Then the heart seems to recollect itself, and almost enjoys the remembrance of its grief. Nothing seems bitter to it; its tears even are sweet, and at the first smile these tears mount up to heaven as a hymn of praise—as a prayer—as a pure incense.

She was, therefore, silent and thoughtful, the gentle Mignon, when calm again was felt in her father's house; when the convalescence of her stepmother gave her the double joy of a mitigated suffering, and a hardened heart subdued by love. She began to think and meditate; she desired nothing—expected nothing—for she knew all she wished to know.

She had not yet seen Maurice; occupied with her pious duties of Sister of Charity, she would have preferred to receive no one; but Mr. Renard, who had the *entreé* of the house, and who always found some excuse for coming there, gave her to understand that Maurice was very much hurt at the position she had taken, and that he could not be consoled at her determination to remain in the convent. She also learned that the health of Maurice was affected, and that he intended to leave Paris on that account.

One day she received a letter from Maurice, which ran as follows:

"My Dear Cousin:—I have been informed of the happy change that your presence has produced in your stepmother's house. You have accomplished a noble duty, and I expected no less from your kind heart. I thus see a double refuge assured you: either the convent, which, to my great regret, you appear to prefer to a worldly existence, or else the house of your stepmother, where your presence has become so necessary. If you need my assistance, my life is at your disposal; but, reassured for your future, and seeing you sheltered from the dangers which threatened you, I now take leave of you, Mignon.

"A malady, from which I have suffered since my return to Paris, obliges me to leave. But, far from you or near you, I will watch over you. If my presence is ever necessary, you have only to address me a line through Mr. Renard, who will always know my whereabouts. I have consulted with him for all that concerns you, and I could not place in better hands the titles of which I was the recipient. You will receive from him all the information relative to your property; he is a friend on whom you can rely as on myself.

"Adieu, Mignon; think sometimes of your friend,

"MAURICE DE TERRENOIRE."

Mignon had then a very hard heart, for she read this letter, smiling, beneath the bower of roses in the garden of the house, while watching her two little sisters. She saw depart the only friend that was left her, knowing at the same time he was sick; all that he had written was in a sad, discouraging strain. Nothing then touched in this letter? nothing?

What Mignon, perhaps, knew, was that she had only a word to say to change all these grand resolutions. She had understood everything. A thousand circumstances which formerly appeared so insignificant to her, fully explained themselves, now that she was on the right track, through the tardy confession of Madame Crevecœur.

Had not the voice of Maurice trembled when he addressed the first words in the convent parlor? He had made a strong effort over himself, but he could not hide his emotion. Had his look not said more than his voice? Had not his hand, which could not let go that of Mignon, spoken as well as his

look and voice? She knew now why the poor boy would not explain himself; it was because Mignon was *too rich.*

She smiled, therefore, because she had kept her secret, while her adversary had betrayed his, and taking up her pen with the assurance of the enemy when he is able to dictate terms to the vanquished, she wrote:

"In your note, Maurice, I read but one line: '*If my presence is ever necessary, you have only to address me a line.*' I need you, Maurice, and call upon you in my father's name. Before your departure, I beg that you will grant me a few moments' interview. Believe in all the affection of your devoted

"Mignon."

Maurice did not wait to be called twice. Mignon *needed* him. How this word pleased him! To serve and obey her was the life he had dreamed of. His sensitiveness was so excessive and susceptible, that he particularly avoided all eagerness. It seemed to him as if it would be seeking, in the eyes of the world, for this fortune which he detested from the bottom of his heart. So he hid his feelings beneath a cold exterior that he fancied well imitated.

Mr. Renard, who had pretensions to great penetration, thought he also divined his secret, and would have liked nothing better than to play an officious part in the grand final scene he had so often imagined. It seemed to this worthy man, a friend of both parties, that they were well matched; for, while Mignon brought her grace, beauty and fortune, Maurice, on his side, had his honorable position, his merit, his brilliant prospects, and, above all, his precious heart. He was the tried and disinterested man to whom Crevecœur had chosen to confide Theresa. This difference of age was just enough to justify the authority of the head of a family.

The lawyer would have, therefore, drawn up the contract with equal advantage on all sides; but Maurice had moderated his zeal, and begged him to think no more about it, pretending that he himself had other plans.

Maurice thus thought himself very clever, and it was with a countenance of steel that he presented himself at the Crevecœur house, where Mignon received him under the garden bower.

"First embrace my little sisters," said she; "how do you find them?"

"Why, Mignon," said Maurice, taking her hand, "are these laughing little children your sisters? From the account of Mr. Renard, I thought them less pretty. They are really very interesting!"

And the children gently held up their faces to be kissed.

"Run and play, my dears," said Mignon, "and make no noise—mamma is sleeping."

The children ran off, putting their fingers to their lips.

"You see, I am made to bring up little children—why change my vocation? I have made my apprenticeship with Graziella, dear little demon; she has given me sometimes trouble enough; but really, I can no longer do without her; I miss her every day. What a good child she is now! You must go and see her, Maurice, before you go, for she belongs to us both.

"But, first, I wish to speak with you on more serious business. I must tell you that my stepmother has become quite reasonable. Does that astonish you? She wants to change her manner of living, and renounce all that has nearly proven her ruin. I often talk with her about her plans. She has written such

sensible letters to her family, that they have forgotten her conduct. She would like to establish herself in her country seat in Normandy, to be near her father; is it not wise? What could she do here? She will take these two little ones here with her, and leave the larger ones at the Augustinians for the present. For she relies on you, Maurice; she knows what my father thought of you. As for myself, I am a rather good nurse; I know how to keep house, but that is all. Will you help me? It is the first service I ask of you. You have a great deal of experience, and besides, our affairs are far from hopeless—they only want putting in order. If you desire it, Maurice, we will have the pleasure of attending together to the same duties, will we not?"

"What happiness," said Maurice, offering her his hand; "I am then able to do something for you—to help and second you in your good and generous intentions. Thank you, Mignon, for having relied on me. You know I only live to serve you. *Thank you*, Mignon—it is the only word I can use; you will see whether we shall succeed; I shall work with such zeal!"

"But your health," said Mignon, pointedly, "your voyage?"

"Oh! I feel better already," said Maurice, "and occupying myself with what interests you, is the very thing that will finish my cure."

"I knew you would say that, Maurice; you can tell me nothing new, and I know what you will say next. I know the friend that my father has left me; but how many things we have yet to talk about! Is it not nice to chat here in the shade, and to look after the happiness of others! Let us see! Our little Graziella, what shall we do with her?" said she, drawing her chair nearer; "she is an artist, heart and soul. You will see her productions. I recommend to you especially the Virgin Mary in the garden. Ask to see it, and tell me who it looks like."

"Ah! for Graziella," said Maurice, "I had imagined something very pleasant. I was so lonely in Florence! I had so much time to think! and I represented to myself—but to what purpose? If you are going back to the convent, what shall I do?"

"Have you not already changed your mind about your voyage, Maurice? Who knows

but what I may do the same some day? I know nothing about it as yet. Let us talk on about Graziella."

"Well," said Maurice, "you can imagine it was a great pleasure for me to learn at Florence that she had such aptitude. When she was very young, her father already thought of making her an artist. 'How well Providence seconds all my plans!' said I, and this Providence is you. To provide her with some support, and avoid a complete ruin, I have preserved the studio of her father; and when I heard that you were for her like a young and tender mother, I said to myself: 'They will, perhaps, have the happiness of not separating from each other afterwards, and then'"———

"And why do you stop, Maurice, in the midst of such a nice oration?"

"And then," continued Maurice, with some embarrassment, "I had already bought, in your name and by precaution, the house where Marx's studio is, for it has a good situation, and I thought it would suit you; and I saw you, in my imagination, installed in this pretty house, with Graziella near you, finishing her sketches, and you aiding her to profit by them, so

that her pride might be spared, and she have the satisfaction of supporting herself, and not be dependent on others. Is it not so, Mignon —would not Graziella have loved to live with you thus?"

"Really," said Mignon, "the idea is excellent, and—is that all you fancied, Maurice?"

"I did not dare go any farther," said Maurice, blushing; "I said to myself"———

"Well, go on; do you wish me to speak for you? I know what you said to yourself—you often thought of my good father and his child—is it not true? and you said: 'I know very well to whom I will confide her, so that she may be happy, for she cannot remain in the convent; it is not proven that she is a Saint Therese. I will give her to some one who will love and cherish her.'"———

"Oh! Mignon," interrupted Maurice, "have I ever, in my words or in my letters"———

"And what are letters and words, Maurice, if the rest of your conduct spoke so plainly? But let me continue—if I go wrong, are you not here to reply to me? You further said to yourself: 'I would give her to Maurice de Terrenoire, for she is neither bad looking nor

ill-natured, and for the sake of her father's memory alone, she will do all that I tell her; but there is one great impediment, and that is—Mignon is rich.'"

"Pity, Mignon, I beg of you."

"No, Maurice; no pity! Let me at least finish my soliloquy, and you can speak afterwards. Maurice, therefore, said to himself, to conclude: 'As she is too rich, I will never say what I think of her—I will never say that, from the day her father confided her to my care, I have had no happier dream than that of uniting forever the daughter and best friend of Aimé Crevecœur. She shall never know it; she may become what she likes; she can stay in her convent, or she may marry no matter whom; but at least it will be proven that I, Maurice, am a disinterested man.' Is there no truth in that? say!"

Maurice bowed his head like a culprit, taking the hands of Mignon; but how sweet these reproaches were to him! With what avidity he listened to the fairy of his future!

"Pardon," said he, "pardon!"

"Perhaps so, if that were all," said Mignon, "but there is another thing which I will find it very difficult to pardon."

"And what, pray," said Maurice, anxiously, "am I not yet worthy of your friendship?"

"What I will not pardon you, Maurice, is —is not helping and encouraging me a little. It is leaving me to get through with my undertaking the best way I can. I believe things are not done in this way in the world; but I, Maurice, do not know the world; I only know your heart and mine, and I rise up to tell you!

"Maurice, kind friend of my father, gentle brother to whom he has confided me, do you wish me to give you my entire life? It is yours; we will pass our days cherishing the memory of him we love, and we will do in his name all the good he liked to do himself."

Mignon stood up; she was majestic and beautiful thus. Maurice, admiring this Biblical calmness and simplicity, had knelt before her without knowing it, and kissed the folds of her dress.

"That, sir, is what you force me to tell you," said Mignon, seriously; "do you think it is easy?"

"What, Mignon," said Maurice, in ecstacy, "you, who with your beauty, your youth and your fortune, have only to choose; you who

have only to appear, in order to charm, do you love *me?* Oh, it was indeed necessary for you to tell me of it; could I hope for this, I, who can only give you in exchange my devotion and my life?"

"Well, is that not everything, Maurice? Youth will pass; what you call my beauty will not, perhaps, last as long as my youth. All will pass except our *souvenirs* and our friendship. As for the fortune, if you find my bark too heavily laden to steer, you can do as the sailors do, you can throw a part of the cargo into the sea. Have we not Graziella? Have we not my little sisters, who will give us occupation, perhaps, for a long time to come? And the poor, Maurice, and the afflicted. How much good we can do! Remember Aimé Crevecœur, and you will no longer be embarrassed with the post of steward, or master of my fortune. What happiness for me to consult you! And you, Maurice, will you not be a little happy to serve me as guide?"

"Enough, Mignon, enough, my child; let me calm myself; have pity on my happiness. I am already so happy with all your plans, let me enjoy my hope! Do not give me

everything at once. Wait and reflect once more!"

"And do you think I would speak rashly on so grave a subject? Do you take me for a child, Maurice? Have I not suffered enough to have time to reflect? Misfortune is a good adviser. I expect nothing from the world. You alone, my friend, have consoled me for what I have seen of it. And why do you place yourself so low? Have you not esteem, consideration, merit, an honorable position, and the hope of a brilliant future, which you will obtain by your labors? You must not doubt yourself, Maurice! And besides, if you will not ask for Mignon, it is Mignon who gives herself to you. Will you leave her without protection?"

"Dear Mignon," said Maurice, finally conquered in his last scruples, and overcome with joy, "I now know why I shall live! Come, your father must hear us; be my beloved and respected wife; be the good angel of our dwelling!"

"It is not without some difficulty," said Mignon, surrendering him her two hands with a charming grace. "Do you know that things are not done in this way in the novels I have

read! You should court me, and pay me a thousand little attentions; I should not understand you; should offer a passive resistance, and make you beg a long time. But what can be done with a grave engineer, who says nothing of what he thinks, and from whom you must extract his secrets? Thank me at least for having invented the *dénouement.*"

The rest of the conversation began to be of a more tender nature, under the garden bower, when Mr. Renard suddenly appeared before them.

"My dear Maurice," said the lawyer, "if you leave to-morrow, I have still many things to tell you; you forget yourself here, and I am not surprised at it."

"I remain here," said Maurice, seriously.

"That is good news," said the lawyer; "but when I implored you to remain, you told me it was impossible. Have you been furnished with any better reasons than my own?"

And he looked at Mignon.

"*Apropos*," said he, "Mademoiselle will have the goodness to give me an audience before returning to the convent, for I must give her some information about her affairs."

"I remain here," said Mignon, imitating the tone of Maurice.

"There is something new going on here," replied Mr. Renard, scrutinizing them both; "you have each of you such a happy and busy air! I really am afraid of intruding."

"No, my dear friend," said Maurice; "we need you now more than ever."

"If, by chance, it is for a contract," resumed the lawyer, after having looked at them alternately, "you will learn that it has been drawn up long since. Eh, my children, I knew how it would all wind up; and I assumed the responsibility. I will bet you will not have a line of it to alter."

They had to separate. How many things Maurice had to do! They multiplied at each moment. He occupied himself attentively with the Crevecœur's business; he went to see little Graziella; he kept the good Superior informed of the great events about to happen; he arranged with solicitude the new home of Mignon; everything progressed at once.

So that one day Madame Crevecœur, still weak and convalescent, was able to leave for Normandy, with her two youngest children,

and live near her family, in an affluence secured her by the intelligent care of Maurice. She was much changed by suffering, and had become another woman. She ever preserved the liveliest gratitude for the gentle Mignon, who had melted the ice of this hardened heart, and she left, at her request, the two oldest children to be educated at the Augustinians.

Mignon was very much rejoiced at telling her dear Superior, Madame Theresa, of the happy events which were taking place, and in receiving her maternal embrace and benediction. Then she descended the garden steps, which recalled her first arrival in this sweet refuge.

There was a general rejoicing in the Convent of the Augustinians, when she, who was called the good angel of the house, returned. She walked for a long time beneath the old plantains; she led by the hand her two little sisters, to whom she gave many instructions. Graziella skipped before her with admiration, clapping her hands, and expressing by her happy countenance all that was denied her in speech; all the young pupils surrounded her, manifesting their friendship by bringing her

the most beautiful flowers of their garden. On seeing the satisfaction of all these young hearts, she really had not the courage to tell her companions that she had come to take leave of them.

Good-bye is always so sad a word to say! When the good Superior had explained that Mignon was no longer of an age to remain in the convent, and that she was going to enter the world, as they would all do in their turn, it was really a touching scene; all the expressive faces saddened, and gentle Mignon put her hands to her eyes to keep back the tears. Suddenly she felt two small arms that hugged her tightly. It was poor Graziella, miserable and bathed in tears, who gazed at her with sorrowful and supplicating eyes. All this said as plainly as words:

"And I, Mignon, dear friend, what will become of me? You, who have loved me so well, do you intend to leave me here alone? Alone! and who will love me now? Who will take an interest in me? Who will look at my work? And I love you so much! Can I live without my mother?"

How well her eyes expressed all she would say! How well friendship can speak, even

without a voice! And she took the hand of Mignon, and put it on her heart, as if to say: "Do you understand?"

"Yes," cried Mignon, "yes, Graziella, I understand it all. You cannot live without me I know. Come, dear child, I am your mother, and you will not be separated from me; has not misfortune been the link that united us? Come, *we are going together.*"

On hearing these last words, Graziella gave a loud cry, and wept more than ever, but with what sweet and joyful tears! They relieved this poor little heart. A holier and more expansive joy succeeded; she embraced the Superior, as if to ask pardon for wishing to leave her, and pointed to Mignon as an excuse.

"Go, poor child," said the Superior, kissing her on the forehead; "follow your gentle mother! Love her well, and God will bless you."

Graziella wanted to embrace the whole establishment; she then rushed to her studio to carry off her tools and models, but everything was already packed up in a box, and her baggage had been prepared beforehand.

Mignon distributed several little keepsakes to her companions, forgetting no one. She

promised to return and see them often, recommending to them her sisters, who had for mothers her two best friends.

As she ascended the last step of the garden piazza, she heard a little voice calling her. She smiled, and turned round. It was the pretty parroquet which climbed towards her, stretching out his wings, and still repeating:

"Mignon! Mignon!"

"Poor little bird!" said the maiden, touched in spite of herself with a little incident which recalled her past; "what! you have not yet forgotten the name which you gave me? And it is you that repeat it on my departure, as you repeated it the day I first entered here! Do not forget it, little bird, when I am gone, so that my companions may sometimes remember the Mignon who is so happy to-day."

And she kissed the pretty head of the attentive bird that listened to this harmonious voice, and appeared to understand these friendly words.

Finally, escorted by the entire household, and holding Graziella by the hand, she crossed for the last time the threshold of the Convent of the Augustinians, not without effort, and not without returning many times to bid a last farewell.

In passing, she offered her hand to the old portress, who was waiting for her at the door, and who said, on seeing her get into the carriage:

"There is a little angel that takes its flight!"

A few days after, Maurice and Mignon, holding Graziella by the hand, entered towards evening a charming house in the Rue de l' Ouest. This is the quarter preferred by artists; it is there that the studio of Marx is preserved, like a mausoleum, by the piety of Maurice; the house is of brick, and adorned with a terrace. It is extremely picturesque in the midst of the bouquet of trees which surround it. Its large windows appear to look with curious eye on the landscape beyond. An immense grating, which belongs to the Luxembourg, permits the gaze to plunge into the fresh foliage of the seed plot; everything charms the eye; nothing offends it.

On the other side of the Luxembourg, large tracts of verdure bound the horizon, and above the trees but three monuments are seen—three temples of the Lord: Saint Genevieve, Saint James, and the Val-de-Grace, which point their golden crosses towards heaven.

Graziella had grown, and was nearly fifteen years old; she gazed around with great curiosity; she was so happy! She knew she would never leave her kind Mignon, and followed her about everywhere; her gestures were so expressive that one hardly perceived her want of speech.

When one of the windows on the second floor was opened; when the child saw the thick foliage, the well known alleys, and on the horizon the three golden crosses, she threw herself into the arms of Mignon with a loud cry; she drew Mignon to the window, and, showing her the steeple of Saint James, she repeated with increasing vivacity:

"Mother! Mother!"

It was the church where she had made her first communion, and where her mother had been carried for the last time.

When Maurice entered, she ran to him, then suddenly stopped, put her hand to her forehead, as if she were seeking some word, and finally exclaimed, with an air of suffering:

"*House!* my mother's *house!*"

As if, according to the order of her ideas, after the sacred name o mother, the sweet name of home, of the domestic hearthstone,

was that which came the most easily and the most naturally upon her lips. Mignon held her dear child on her heart, and wiped away her tears. Maurice was deeply impressed; he watched with a sort of terror this struggle between nature and affection. Suddenly, an idea presented itself to his mind; he somewhat feared the responsibility of what he was about to do, but at the time hoped some result from a shock, and proceeded forthwith to execute his plan.

"Come, come!" said he, dragging Mignon and Graziella after him, and making them rapidly descend the stairs.

He opened a large door on the ground floor, took one hand of Graziella, while Mignon held the other of the trembling child. The room was nearly completely dark; one could scarcely distinguish here and there some white phantoms.

"Let in the light," said he to a servant, who was awaiting this order.

In a moment the large blinds were thrown open, and a torrent of light streamed into the studio of Marx. The scream that the poor child gave forth cannot be described. Her arms were stretched towards the ravishing

statue of Graziella, which shone in all its splendor from its high pedestal.

"*Graziella! Graziella!*" murmured she.

Then, as if feeling herself animated with renewed strength, she dropped the hands which supported her, and advanced gravely and alone to the foot of the statue.

"This is the studio of my father," said she, in a clear voice; and she seemed to listen with astonishment to the words which issued from her mouth and resounded through the lofty apartment.

"And here—here is the chamber of my mother."

And she sprang forward to enter, but suddenly stopped, as if seized by a misgiving.

Maurice and Mignon took her by the hand.

"Dear child, dear little thing," said Mignon, "it is we who are now your father and mother; you are in your own studio; all this is yours; you will never leave us, and will speak to us now. We will be happy together in remembering those that we have loved and lost. Come, speak to us again! Your voice does me good!"

Graziella, smiling, and as if in ecstacy, reflected for a moment, looked around and be-

held all these works of art so familiar to her, then, throwing herself into the arms of Mignon, she murmured in a faint voice :

" My father, my mother, how I will love you !"

Then, holding out her hand to Maurice, she sank, exhausted, on a sofa.

* * * * * * *

The setting sun gilded with his last rays the three golden crosses which stood out against the blue ether, and appeared like cherished souls which showed themselves once more to the living.

Yes, the soul of Crevecœur was indeed there between Maurice and Mignon, hand in hand.

And Graziella had also near her the souls of her father and mother.

And at the close of day, these consoled spirits seemed to illuminate with a soft light this scene so delicious to their hearts, as the Bengal fire lights up with its fantastic glow the last tableaux of a fairy pageant.

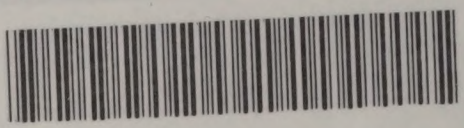
L 770

THE END.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS THE

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00023166112